



HE WAS SEEN TO TAKE THE BRANCH FROM A FIREMAN ON
ONE OF THE UPPER FLOORS.—*Frontispiece*

LIFE IN THE RED BRIGADE

AND

FORT DESOLATION

By R. M. BALLANTYNE

AUTHOR OF "THE WILD MAN OF THE WEST;" "THE RED ERIC;" "PEAKS ON
THE YELLS;" "THE LIFEBOAT;" "THE CORAL ISLAND;" "THE YOUNG
TRAWLER;" "POST HASTE;" "BLACK IVORY," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE.

"LIFE IN THE RED BRIGADE" tells of much that I heard and saw during two weeks of nightly intercourse with the London Firemen.

"FORT DESOLATION" depicts scenes which made an indelible impression on my mind during a sojourn of six years among the Red Indians and Fur Traders of Rupert's Land.

R. M. BALLANTYNE.

HARROW-ON-THE-HILL, 1887.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

HE WAS SEEN TO TAKE THE BRANCH FROM A FIREMAN ON ONE OF THE UPPER FLOORS,	<i>Frontispiece</i>
CRACK! WENT THE WHIP; FIRE FLEW FROM THE PAVING STONES,	<i>to face page 13</i>
JOE ENGAGED IN PRIVATE PRACTICE,	84
ENTRANCE OF THE SUPPOSED GHOST,	221

LIFE IN THE RED BRIGADE.

CHAPTER I.

WET, worn and weary—with water squeaking in his boots, and a mixture of charcoal and water streaking his face to such an extent that, as a comrade asserted, his own mother would not have known him—a stout young man walked smartly one morning through the streets of London towards his own home.

He was tall and good-looking, as well as stout, and, although wet and weary, had a spring in his step which proved beyond all question that he was not worn out. As the comrade above referred to would have said, "there was plenty of go in him still." His blue and belted coat, sailor's cap, and small hatchet, with the brass helmet swinging by its chin strap on his left arm, betokened him a member of "The Red Brigade,"—a London fireman—one of

those dare-anything characters who appear to hold their lives remarkably cheap, for they carry these lives in their hands, as the saying goes, night and day; who seem to be able to live in smoke as if it were their native element; who face the flames as if their bodies were made of cast iron; and whose apparent delight in fire is such that one is led to suspect they must be all more or less distantly connected with the family of Salamander.

The young man's expression of countenance, as far as it could be discerned through the charcoal and water, was hearty, and his name—Dashwood—was in keeping with his profession. The comrade, whose opinion we have already quoted, was wont to say that he ought to change it to Dashwater that being his chief occupation in life. We need scarcely say that this comrade was rather fond of his joke.

Arrived at a small street, not far from the Regent Circus, young Dashwood entered a fire-station there, and found the comrade above referred to in the act of disposing himself on a narrow tressel-bed, on which there was no bedding save one blanket. The comrade happened to be on duty that night. It was his duty to repose on the tressel bedstead, booted and belted, ready at a moment's notice to respond to "calls." Another fireman lay sleeping at his side, on another

tressel-bed, similarly clothed, for there were always two men on duty all night at that station. The guard-room, or, as it was styled, the "lobby," in which they lay, was a very small room, with a bright fire in the grate, for it was winter; a plain wooden desk near the window; a plain deal table near the door, on which stood four telegraphic instruments; and having the walls ornamented with a row of Wellington boots on one side, and a row of bright brass helmets on the other, each helmet having a small hatchet suspended by a belt below it.

The comrade, who looked very sleepy, glanced at a small clock, whose tick was the only sound that fell upon the ear, and whose hands indicated the hour of half-past two.

On hearing the door open, the comrade, whose name was Bob Clazie, raised himself on one elbow.

"Ah, Joe,—that you?" he said, with a somewhat violent yawn.

"All that's left of me, anyhow," replied Joe Dashwood, as he hung up his helmet and axe on his own particular peg. "Bin much doin', Bob?"

"Not much," growled Bob; "but they don't give a poor fellow much chance of a sleep with them telegraphs. Roused me four times already within the last hour—stops for chimbleys."

"Ha! very inconsiderate of 'em," said Dashwood, turning towards the door. "It's time I had a snooze now, so I'll bid 'ee good night, Bob."

Just as he spoke, one of the sharp little telegraphic bells rang viciously. He waited to ascertain the result while Clazie rose—quickly but not hurriedly—and went to read the instrument with sleepy eyes.

"Another stop for a chimbley," he muttered, with a remonstrative growl. By this he meant that the head office in Watling Street had telegraphed that a chimney had gone on fire in some part of London; that it was being looked after, and that he and his comrades were to *stop* where they were and pay no attention to it, even although some one should rush into the office like a maniac shouting that there was a fire in that particular place. This use of the telegraph in thus *stopping* the men of the Brigade from going out in force to trifling fires, is of the greatest service, because it not only prevents them from being harassed, the engines from being horsed, and steam got up needlessly, but it prevents rascals from running from station to station, and getting several shillings, instead of the one shilling which is due to the first intimator of any fire.

Having acknowledged the message, Bob Clazie lay down once more, gave another expostulatory grunt,

and drew his blanket over him ; while Joe Dashwood went home.

Joe's home consisted of a small apartment round the corner of the street, within a few seconds' run of the station. Off the small apartment there was a large closet. The small apartment was Dashwood's drawing-room, dining-room, and kitchen ; the large closet was his bed-room.

Dashwood had a wife, "as tight a little craft, with as pretty a figurehead," he was wont to say, "as you could find in a day's walk through London." That was saying a good deal, but there was some truth in it. When Joe entered, intending to go to bed for the night, he found that Mary had just got up for the day. It was "washing-day," or something of that sort, with Mary, which accounted for her getting up at about three in the morning.

"Hallo, lass, up already !" exclaimed the strapping fireman as he entered the room, which was a perfect marvel of tidiness, despite washing-day.

"Yes, Joe, there's plenty to do, an' little May don't give me much time to do it," replied Mary, glancing at a crib where little May, their first-born, lay coiled up in sheets like a rosebud in snow.

Joe, having rubbed the water and charcoal from his face with a huge jack-towel, went to the wash-

tub, and imprinted a hearty kiss on Mary's rosy lips, which she considerably held up for the purpose of being saluted. He was about to do the same to the rosebud, when Mary stopped him with an energetic "Don't!"

"W'y not, Molly?" asked the obedient man.

"'Cause you'll wake her up."

Thus put down, Joe seated himself humbly on a sea-chest, and began to pull off his wet boots.

"It's bin a bad fire, I think," said Mary, glancing at her husband.

"Rather. A beer-shop in Whitechapel. House of five rooms burnt out, and the roof off."

"You look tired, Joe," said Mary.

"I *am* a bit tired, but an hour's rest will put me all to-rights. That's the third fire I've bin called to to-night; not that I think much about that, but the last one has bin a stiff one, an' I got a fall or two that nigh shook the wind out o' me."

"Have something to eat, Joe," said Mary, in a sympathetic tone.

"No thankee, lass; I need sleep more than meat just now."

"A glass of beer, then," urged Mary, sweeping the soap suds off her pretty arms and hands, and taking up a towel.

The fireman shook his head, as he divested himself of his coat and neckcloth.

"Do, Joe," entreated Mary; "I'm sure it will do you good, and no one could say that you broke through your principles, considerin' the condition you're in."

Foolish Mary! she was young and inexperienced, and knew not the danger of tempting her husband to drink. She only knew that hundreds of first-rate, sober, good, trustworthy men took a glass of beer now and then without any evil result following, and did not think that her Joe ran the slightest risk in doing the same. But Joe knew his danger. His father had died a drunkard. He had listened to earnest men while they told of the bitter curse that drink had been to thousands, that to some extent the tendency to drink was hereditary, and that, however safe some natures might be while moderately indulging, there were other natures to which moderate drinking was equivalent to getting on those rails which, running down a slight incline at first—almost a level—gradually pass over a steep descent, where brakes become powerless, and end at last in total destruction.

"I don't require beer, Molly," said Dashwood with a smile, as he retired into the large closet; "at my

time o' life a man must be a miserable, half-alive sort o' critter, if he can't git along without Dutch courage. The sight o' your face and May's there, is better than a stiff glass o' grog to me any day. It makes me feel stronger than the stoutest man in the brigade. Good night, lass, or good mornin'. I must make the most o' my time. There's no sayin' how soon the next call may come. Seems to me as if people was settin' their houses alight on purpose to worry us."

The tones in which the last sentences were uttered, and the creaking of the bedstead indicated that the fireman was composing his massive limbs to rest, and scarcely had Mrs. Dashwood resumed her washing, when his regular heavy breathing proclaimed him to be already in the land of Nod.

Quietly but steadily did Mrs. Dashwood pursue her work. Neat little under-garments, and fairy-like little socks, and indescribable little articles of lilliputian clothing of various kinds, all telling of the little rosebud in the crib, passed rapidly through Mary's nimble fingers, and came out of the tub fair as the driven snow. Soon the front of the fireplace became like a ship dressed with flags, with this difference, that the flags instead of being gay and parti-coloured, were white and suggestive of infancy and innocence. The gentle noise of washing, and the soft breathing of

the sleepers, and the tiny ticking of the clock over the chimney-piece, were the only audible sounds, for London had reached its dearest hour, four o'clock. Rioters had exhausted their spirits, natural and artificial, and early risers had not begun to move.

Presently to these sounds were added another very distant sound which induced Mary to stop and listen. "A late cab," she whispered to herself. The rumbling of the late cab became more distinct, and soon proved it to be a hurried cab. To Mary's accustomed ear this raised some disagreeable idea. She cast a look of anxiety into the closet, wiped her hands quickly, and taking up a pair of dry boots which had been standing near the fire, placed them beside her husband's coat. This was barely accomplished when the hurried cab was heard to pull up at the neighbouring fire-station. Only a few seconds elapsed when racing footsteps were heard outside. Mary seized her husband's arm—"Up, Joe, up," she cried and darted across the room, leaped on a chair, and laid violent hands on the tongue of the door-bell, thereby preventing a furious double ring from disturbing the rosebud!

At the first word "up," the bed in the closet groaned and creaked as the fireman bounded from it, and the house shook as he alighted on the floor.

Next moment he appeared buttoning his braces, and winking like an owl in sunshine. One moment sufficed to pull on the right boot, another moment affixed the left. Catching up his half-dried coat with one hand, and flinging on his sailor's cap with the other, he darted from the house, thrust himself into his coat as he ran along and appeared at the station just as four of his comrades drew the fire-engine up to the door, while two others appeared with three horses, which they harnessed thereto—two abreast, one in front—with marvellous rapidity. The whole affair, from the "Up, Joe, up," of Mrs. Dashwood, to the harnessing of the steeds, was accomplished in less than five minutes. By that time Joe and several of his mates stood ready belted, and armed with brass helmets on their heads, which flashed back the rays of the neighbouring street lamp and the engine lanterns.

There was wonderfully little noise or fuss, although there was so much display of promptitude and energy; the reason being that all the men were thoroughly drilled, and each had his particular duty to perform; there was, therefore, no room for orders, counter-orders, or confusion.

The moment the call was given, Bob Clazie, having received no telegraphic "stop," had at once run to

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CRACK! WENT THE WHIP; FIRE FLEW FROM THE PAVING
STONES.

ring up the men, who, like Dashwood, had been sleeping close at hand. He rung up the driver of the engine first. At the same moment his comrade on duty had run round to the stable, where the horses stood ready harnessed, and brought them out. Thus the thing was done without a moment's delay. The driver, when roused, flung on his coat and helmet, and ran to the engine. It was a steam fire-engine; that is, the pumps were worked by steam instead of by hand. The firing was ready laid, and the water kept nearly at the boiling point by means of a jet of gas. He had scarcely applied a light to the fire and turned off the gas, when four comrades ran into the shed, seized the red-painted engine, and dragged her out, as we have seen.

Much shorter time did it take to do all this than is required to describe it.

When the driver mounted his box, the others sprang on the engine. Crack! went the whip, fire flew from the paving-stones, fire poured from the furnace, the spirited steeds tore round the corner into Regent Street, and off they went to the fire, in the dark winter morning, like a monster rocket or a vision of Roman gladiators whirled away by a red fiery dragon!

Mrs. Dashwood heard them go, and turned with a

little sigh to her washing-tub. She was very proud of Joe, and she had good reason to be, for he was one of the best men in the Red Brigade, and, what was of more importance to her, he was one of the best husbands in the world. Perhaps this was largely owing to the fact that she was one of the best of wives! His career as a fireman had been short, but he had already become known as one of the daring men, to whom their Chief looked when some desperate service had to be performed. On several occasions he had, while in charge of the fire-escape, been the means of saving life. Upon the whole, therefore, it is not surprising that Mary was proud of her husband—almost as proud of him as she was of the little rosebud; but in regard to this she was never quite sure of the exact state of her mind.

Meditating on Joe, and giving an occasional glance at May, whose sweet upturned face seemed nothing short of angelic, Mrs. Dashwood continued energetically to scrub the fairy-like habiliments, and make the soapsuds fly.

Meanwhile, the red engine whirled along its fiery course at full gallop, like a horrible meteor, clattering loudly in the deserted streets of the great city. So it would have sped in its wild career even if it had been broad day, for the loss of a single moment in reaching

a fire is important; but in this case the men, instead of sitting like brazen-headed statues, would have stood up and increased the din of their progress by shouting continuously to clear the crowded thoroughfares. As it was, they had it all to themselves. Sometimes the corner of a window-blind was hastily lifted, showing that some wakeful one had curiosity enough to leap out of bed to see them pass. Here and there a policeman paused, and followed them with his eye as long as the tail of sparks from the furnace was visible. Occasionally a belated toper stopped in his staggering progress to gaze at them, with an idiotical assumption of seriousness and demand, "Wash ey maki'n sh' a 'orrible row for?" Now and then a cat, with exploratory tendencies, put up its back and greeted them with a glare and a fuff, or a shut-out cur gave them a yelping salute; but the great mass of the London population let them go by without notice, as they would have treated any other passing thunderbolt with which they had nothing to do.

And yet they *had* something to do with that engine, or, rather, it had to do with them. But for it, and the rest of the Red brigade, London would have long ago been in ashes. It is only by unremitting vigilance and incessant action that the London

fires can be kept within bounds. There are nearly two thousand fires in the year in the metropolis, and the heroic little army which keeps these in check numbers only three hundred and seventy-eight men. That this force is much too small for the work to be done is proved by the fact, that the same men have sometimes to turn out three, four or five times in a night, to work of the most trying and dangerous nature. There is no occupation in which the lives of the men employed are so frequently risked, and their physical endurance so severely tried, as that of a London fireman. As there are, on the average, five fires every night all the year round, it follows that he is liable to be called out several times every night; and, in point of fact, this actually takes place very often. Sometimes he has barely returned from a fire, and put off his drenched garments, when he receives another "call," and is obliged to put them on again, and go forth weary—it may be fasting—to engage in another skirmish with the flames. In all weathers and at all seasons—hot or cold, wet or dry—he must turn out at a moment's notice, to find himself, almost before he is well awake, in the midst of stifling smoke, obliged to face and to endure the power of roasting flames, to stand under cataracts of water, beside tottering walls and gables, or to plunge

through smoke and flames, in order to rescue human lives. Liability to be called *occasionally* to the exercise of such courage and endurance is severe enough ; it is what every soldier is liable to in time of war, and the lifeboat-man in times of storm ; but to be liable to such calls several times every day and night all round the year is hard indeed, and proves that the Red Brigade, although almost perfect in its organization and heroic in its elements, is far too small. Paris has about seven hundred fires a year ; New York somewhere about three hundred ; yet these cities have a far larger body of firemen than London, which with little short of two thousand fires a year, does her work of extinction with only three hundred and seventy-eight men !

She succeeds because every man in the little army is a hero, not one whit behind the Spartans of old. The London fireman, Ford, who, in 1871, at one great fire rescued six lives from the flames, and perished in accomplishing the noble deed, is a sample of the rest. All the men of the Brigade are picked men—picked from among the strapping and youthful tars of the navy, because such men are accustomed to strict discipline ; to being “ turned out ” at all hours and in all weathers, and to climb with cool heads in trying circumstances, besides being, as a class, pre-eminently

noted for daring anything and sticking at nothing. Such men are sure to do their work well, however hard; to do it without complaining, and to die, if need be, in the doing of it. But ought they to be asked to sacrifice so much? Surely Londoners would do well to make that complaint, which the men will *never* make, and insist on the force being increased, not only for the sake of the men, but also for the sake of themselves; for, although there *are* three hundred and seventy-eight heroes who hold the fiery foe so well in check, there are limits to heroic powers of action, and it stands to reason that double the number would do it better.

But we are wandering from our point. The engine has been tearing all this time at racing speed along the Bayswater Road. It turns sharp round a corner near Notting Hill Gate—so sharp that the feat is performed on the two off wheels, and draws from Bob Clazie the quiet remark, "Pretty nigh on our beam-ends that time, Joe." A light is now seen glaring in the sky over the house-tops; another moment, and the engine dashes into Ladbroke Square, where a splendid mansion is in a blaze, with the flames spouting from the windows of the second floor.

The engine pulls up with a crash; the reeking

horses are removed and led aside. "Look alive, lads!" is the only word uttered, and the helmeted heroes, knowing their work well, go into action with that cool promptitude which is more than half the battle in attacking the most desperate odds or the fiercest foe.

CHAPTER II.

THE house on fire was, as we have said, an elegant mansion—one of those imposing edifices, with fresh paint outside, and splendid furniture within, which impress the beholder with the idea of a family in luxurious circumstances.

No one could tell how the fire originated. In the daily "report" of fires, made next day by the chief of the Red Brigade, wherein nine fires were set down as having occurred within the twenty-four hours, the cause of this fire in Ladbroke Square was reported "unknown." Of the other eight, the supposed causes were, in one case, "escape of gas," in another, "paraffin-lamp upset," in another "intoxication," in another, "spark from fire," in another, "candle," in another, "children playing with matches," and so on; but in this mansion none of these causes were deemed probable. The master of the house turned off the gas regularly every night before going to bed, therefore it could not have been caused by escape of gas. Paraffin-

lamps were not used in the house. Candles were; but they were always carefully handled and guarded. As to intoxication, the most suspicious of mortals could not have dreamed of such a cause in so highly respectable a family. The fires were invariably put out at night, and guards put on in every room, therefore, no spark could have been so audacious as to have leaped into being and on to the floor. There were, indeed, "matches" in the house, but there were no children, except one old lady, who, having reached her second childhood, might perhaps have been regarded as a child. It is true there was a certain Betty, a housemaid, whose fingers were reported by the cook to be "all thumbs," and who had an awkward and incurable tendency to spill, and break, and drop, and fall over things, on whom suspicion fastened very keenly at first; but Betty, who was young and rather pretty, asserted so earnestly that she had been unusually happy that night in having done nothing whatever of a condemnable nature, and backed her asseverations with such floods of tears, that she was exonerated, and, as we have said, the cause was reported "unknown."

It was not, however, so completely unknown as was at first supposed. There was a certain grave, retiring, modest individual who knew the gentleman of the

house and his doings a little more thoroughly than was agreeable to the said gentleman, and who had become aware, in some unaccountable way, which it is impossible to explain, that he, the said gentleman, had very recently furnished the house in a sumptuous style, and had insured it much beyond its value. The said individual's knowledge ultimately resulted in the said gentleman being convicted and transported for arson!

But with all this we have nothing to do. Whatever the uncertainty that afterwards arose as to the cause of the fire, there could be no uncertainty as to the fire itself at the time. It blazed and roared so furiously, that the inside of the house resembled a white-hot furnace. Flames spouted from the windows and chimneys, glaring fiercely on the spectators, who assembled rapidly from all quarters, as if defying them all, and daring the firemen to do their worst. Sparks enough to have shamed all the Roman candles ever made in or out of Rome were vomited forth continuously, and whirled away with volumes of dense black smoke into the wintry sky.

"It's well alight," observed a chimney-sweep to a policeman.

The policeman made no reply, although it did seem as if it would have been quite safe, even for a police-

man, to admit that the sweep was thoroughly correct. It *was* "well alight," so well, that it seemed absolutely ridiculous to suppose that the firemen could make any impression on it at all.

But the firemen did not appear to think the attempt ridiculous. "Never give in" was, or might have been, their motto. It was their maxim to attack the enemy with promptitude and vigour, no matter what his strength might be. When he crept out like a sneaking burglar from under a hearth-stone, or through an over-heated flue, they would "have at him" with the hand-pumps and quench him at once. When he came forth like a dashing party of skirmishers, to devastate a wood-yard, or light up a music-hall with unusual brilliancy, they sent an engine or two against him without delay, and put him down in an hour or two. When he attacked "in force," they despatched engine after engine—manuals and steamers—to the front, until he was quelled, and if the prey already seized could not be wrenched from his grasp, they, at all events, killed him before he could destroy more. When he boldly and openly declared war, attacking the great combustible warehouses of Tooley Street, threatening a descent on the shipping, and almost setting the Thames on fire, they sent out the whole available army from every quarter of the metropolis

with all their engines of war—manuals, steamers, and floating batteries, or spouteries, and fought him tooth and nail, till he gave in. They might be terribly over-matched—as in the case of the great fire when the gallant Braidwood fell—they might lose men, and might have to fight day and night for weeks, but they would “never say die,” until the enemy had died and left them, tired and torn but still tough and triumphant victors on the field of battle.

Before the engine from Regent Street came on the ground, two manual engines from Kensington and Notting Hill had arrived, and opened water on the foe. At first their shot fell harmlessly on the roaring furnace; but by the time the “steamer” had got ready for action, some little effect was beginning to be produced. When this great gun, so to speak, began to play, and sent a thick continuous stream through the windows, like an inexhaustible water mitrailleuse, clouds of white steam mingled with the black smoke, and varied the aspect of the fire, but did not appear to lessen its fury in any degree. Just then another manual engine dashed into the square at full gallop, and formed up. Before it had well taken a position, another “steamer,” with three horses, came swinging round the corner, and fell into the ranks. The panting steeds were unharnessed, the bold

charioteers leaped down, the suction-pipe was dipped into the water-trough, and the hose attached. As two engines cannot "drink" at the same plug, a canvas trough with an iron frame is put over the plug, having a hole in its bottom, which fits tightly round the plug. It quietly fills, and thus two or more engines may do their work convivially—dip in their suction-pipes, and "drink" simultaneously at the same fountain.

"Down with her!" shouted the man who held the "branch," or nozzle, at the end of the hose.

A steam whistle gives a shrill, short reply; the engine quivers under the power of man's greatest servant, and another battery opens on the foe.

But London firemen are not content to play at long bowls. While the artillery goes thus vigorously into action, the helmets of the men are seen gleaming and glancing everywhere amid the smoke, searching for weak points, turning the enemy's flanks, and taking him in rear. Hose are dragged through neighbouring houses, trailing their black coils like horrid water snakes, through places where such things were never meant to be. If too short, additional lengths are added, again and again, till the men who hold the branches gain points of vantage on adjoining roofs or outhouses, until, at last from below, above,

in front, and behind, cataracts of water dash into the glowing furnace.

The fire-escape had been first to reach the ground after the alarm was given, this being the instrument nearest to the scene of conflagration. It happened that night to be in charge of David Clazie, a brother of Comrade Bob. Being a smart young fellow, David, had—with the assistance of two early risers who chanced to be at hand, and the policeman on the beat—run up his escape, and put it in position before the fire had gained its full force. The gentleman of the house had already got out, and fled in his night garments; but the fire had rendered the staircase impassable, so that the cook, the many-thumbed Betty, and the old lady, who was the gentleman's mother, were imprisoned in the upper floor.

David Clazie did not learn this from the gentleman, however. That amiable character had received such a fright, that he had taken himself off, no one—except the individual aforementioned—knew whither. Fortunately, Betty announced the fact of her existence by rushing to a window and shrieking. David ran his escape towards the window, mounted the ladder, carried the damsel down, bore her kicking, into a neighbouring house, and left her in fits. Meanwhile the cook rushed to the same window, shrieked, and fell

back half-suffocated with the smoke which just then surrounded her. A policeman gallantly ran up the escape, jumped into the room, gathered up the cook with great difficulty—for she was unusually fat and the smoke very suffocating—carried her down, bore her to the same house where Betty lay, and left her there in violent hysterics.

As neither of them could answer questions, it could not be ascertained whether there were any more people in the burning house. David therefore explored it as far as was possible in the circumstances, and much more than was safe for himself, but found no one. After nearly choking himself, therefore, he drew aside the escape to prevent its being burned.

When the engines came up, however, it was again brought into play, to enable the firemen to get up with their "branches" to the upper windows.

"Try that window, Dashwood," said the officer of the station to which Joe belonged, pointing to a window on the second floor. "There ain't much smoke coming out."

Before he had done speaking, Joe and a comrade had pushed the escape towards the window in question. He ascended and leaped into the room, but could scarcely see for the smoke. Knowing that the air in a burning house is clearer near the floor, he stooped as

low as possible, and went round the room guiding himself by the walls. Coming to a door he seized the handle and tried to open it, but found it locked, and the handle so hot that he was forced to let go abruptly. He seized a chair, tried to burst it open with a blow, and shivered the chair to atoms, but did not force the door. A powerful effort with his foot also failed. Rushing to the window he got out on the escape, and shouted:—

“The axe, lads, look sharp and pass up the hose. We’ll get at it here.”

A large heavy axe was handed up by one fireman, while another let down a rope, to which the end of the hose was attached and hauled up.

Joe seized the axe, returned to the door, and, with one blow, dashed it open.

Flames leaped upon him, as if they had been eagerly awaiting the opportunity, licked hungrily round his legs, and kissed his whiskers—of which, by the way, he was rather proud; and with good reason, for they were very handsome whiskers. But Joe cared no more for them at that moment than he did for his boots. He was forced to retreat, however, to the window, where Bob Clazie had already presented his branch and commenced a telling discharge on the fire.

"That's the way to do it," muttered Bob, as he directed the branch and turned aside his head to avoid as much as possible, the full volume of the smoke.

"Let's get a breath o' fresh air," gasped Joe Dashwood, endeavouring to squeeze past his comrade through the window.

At that moment a faint cry was heard. It appeared to come from an inner room.

"Some one there, Joe," said Bob Clazie in a grave tone, but without diverting his attention for an instant from the duty in which he was engaged.

Joe made no reply, but at once leaped back into the room, and, a second time, felt his way round the walls. He came on another door. One blow of the ponderous axe dashed it in, and revealed a bed-room not quite so densely filled with smoke as the outer room. Observing a bed looming through the smoke, he ran towards it, and struck his head against one of the posts so violently that he staggered. Recovering he made a grasp at the clothes, and felt that there was a human being wrapped tightly up in them like a bundle. A female shriek followed. Joe Dashwood was not the man to stand on ceremony in such circumstances. He seized the bundle, straightened it out a little, so as to make it more portable, and throwing it over his shoulder, made a rush towards the window by which he had

entered. All this the young fireman did with considerable energy and haste, because the density of the smoke was increasing, and his retreat might be cut off by the flames at any moment.

"Clear the way there!" he gasped, on reaching the window.

"All right," replied Bob Clazie, who was still presenting his branch with untiring energy at the flames.

Joe passed out, got on the head of the escape, and, holding the bundle on his shoulder with one hand, grasped the rounds of the ladder with the other. He descended amid the cheers of the vast multitude, which had by this time assembled to witness the fire.

As Joe hurried towards the open door of the nearest house, Betty, with the thumbs, rushed frantically out, screaming, "Missis! oh! my! she'll be burnt alive! gracious! help! fire! back room! first floor! oh, my!"

"Be easy, lass," cried Joe, catching the flying domestic firmly by the arm, and detaining her despite her struggles.

"Let me go; missis! I forgot her——!"

"Here she is," cried Joe, interrupting, "all safe. You come and attend to her."

The reaction on poor Betty's feelings was so great that she went into fits a second time, and was carried

with her mistress into the house, where the cook still lay in violent hysterics.

Joe laid the bundle gently on the bed, and looked quickly at the bystanders. Observing several cool and collected females among them, he pointed to the bundle, which had begun to exhibit symptoms of life, and said briefly, "She's all right, look after her," and vanished like a wreath of that smoke into which in another moment he plunged.

He was not a moment too soon, for he found Bob Clazie, despite his fortitude and resolution, on the point of abandoning the window, where the smoke had increased to such a degree as to render suffocation imminent.

"Can't stand it," gasped Bob, scrambling a few paces down the ladder.

"Give us the branch, Bob, I saw where it was in fetchin' out the old woman," said Joe in a stifled voice.

He grasped the copper tube from which the water spouted with such force as to cause it to quiver and recoil like a living thing, so that, being difficult to hold, it slipped aside and nearly fell. The misdirected water-spout went straight at the helmet of a policeman, which it knocked off with the apparent force of a cannon shot; plunged into the bosom of a stout

collier, whom it washed whiter than he had ever been since the days of infancy, and scattered the multitude like chaff before the wind. Seeing this, the foreman ordered "No. 3" engine (which supplied the particular branch in question) to cease pumping.

Joe recovered the erratic branch in a moment, and dragged it up the escape, Bob, who was now in a breatheable atmosphere, helping to pass up the hose. The foreman, who seemed to have acquired the power of being in several places at one and the same moment of time, and whose watchful eye was apparently everywhere, ordered Bob's brother David and another man named Ned Crashington, to go up and look after Joe Dashwood.

Meanwhile Joe shouted, "Down with No. 3;" by which he meant, "up with as much water as possible from No. 3, and as fast as you can!" and sprang into the room from which he had just rescued the old woman. In passing out with her he had observed a glimmer of flame through the door which he had first broken open, and which, he reflected while descending the escape, was just out of range of Bob Clazie's branch. It was the thought of this that had induced him to hurry back so promptly; in time, as we have seen, to relieve his comrade. He now pointed the branch at the precise spot, and hit that part of the

fire right in its heart. The result was that clouds of steam mingled with the smoke. But Joe was human after all. The atmosphere, or, rather, the want of atmosphere, was too much for him. He was on the point of dropping the branch, and rushing to the window for his life, when Ned Crashington, feeling his way into the room, tumbled over him.

Speech was not required in the circumstances. Ned knew exactly what to do, and Joe knew that he had been sent to relieve him. He therefore delivered the branch to Ned, and at once sprang out on the escape, where he encountered David Clazie.

"Go in, Davy, he can't stand it long," gasped Joe.

"No fears of 'im," replied Davy, with a smile, as he prepared to enter the window; "Ned can stand hanythink a'most. But, I say, send up some more 'ands. It takes two on us to 'old *that* ere branch, you know."

The brass helmets of more hands coming up the escape were observed as he spoke, for the foreman saw that this was a point of danger, and, like a wise general, had his reserves up in time.

David Clazie found Ned standing manfully to the branch. Ned was noted in the Red Brigade as a man who could "stand a'most anything," and who appeared to cherish a martyr-like desire to die by

roasting or suffocation. This was the more surprising that he was not a boastful or excitable fellow, but a silent, melancholy, and stern man, who, except when in action, usually seemed to wish to avoid observation. Most of his comrades were puzzled by this compound of character, but some of them hinted that Crashington's wife could have thrown some light on the subject. Be this as it may, whenever the chief or the foreman of the Brigade wanted a man for any desperate work, they invariably turned to Ned Crashington. Not that Ned was one whit more courageous or willing to risk his life than any of the other men, *all* of whom, it must be remembered, were picked for courage and capacity for their special work; but he combined the greatest amount of coolness with the utmost possible recklessness, besides being unusually powerful, so that he could be depended on for wise as well as desperate action. Joe Dashwood was thought to be almost equal to Ned—indeed, in personal activity he was superior; but there was nothing desperate in Joe's character. He was ever ready to dare anything with a sort of jovial alacrity, but he did not appear, like Ned, to court martyrdom.

While Ned and David subdued the flames above, Joe descended the escape, and being by that time almost exhausted, sat down to rest with several

comrades who had endured the first shock of battle, while fresh men were sent to continue the fight.

"Have a glass, Joe?" said one of the firemen, coming round with a bottle of brandy.

"No, thank 'ee," said Joe, "I don't require it."

"Hand it here," said a man who stood leaning against the rails beside him, "my constitution is good, like the British one, but it's none the worse for a drop o' brandy after such tough work."

There was probably truth in what the man said. Desperate work sometimes necessitates a stimulant, nevertheless, there were men in the Red Brigade who did their desperate work on nothing stronger than water, and Joe was one of these.

In three hours the fire was subdued, and before noon of that day it was extinguished. The "report" of it, as published by the chief of the Fire Brigade next morning, recorded that a house in Ladbroke Square, occupied by Mr. Blank, a gentleman whose business was "private"—in other words, unknown—had been set on fire by some "unknown cause," that the whole tenement had been "burnt out" and "the roof off," and that the contents of the building were "insured in the Phoenix."

Some of the firemen were sent home about day-break, when the flames first began to be mastered.

Joe was among these. He found Mary ready with a cup of hot coffee, and the rosebud, who had just awakened, ready with a kiss. Joe accepted the second, swallowed the first, stretched his huge frame with a sigh of weariness, remarked to Mary that he would turn in, and in five minutes thereafter was snoring profoundly.

CHAPTER III.

ONE pleasant afternoon in spring David Clazie and Ned Crashington sat smoking together in front of the fire in the lobby of the station, chatting of hair-breadth escapes by flood and fire.

"It's cold enough yet to make a fire a very pleasant comrade—w'en 'e's inside the bars," observed David.

"H'm," replied Crashington.

As this was not a satisfactory reply, David said so, and remarked, further, that Ned seemed to be in the blues.

"Wotever can be the matter wi' you, Ned," said David, looking at his companion with a perplexed air; "you're a young, smart, 'ealthy fellar, in a business quite to your mind, an' with a good-lookin' young wife at 'ome, not to mention a babby. W'y wot more would you 'ave, Ned? You didn't ought for to look blue."

"Pr'aps not," replied Ned, relighting his pipe, and

puffing between sentences, "but a man may be in a business quite to his mind and have a good-looking wife, and a babby, and health to boot, without bein' exactly safe from an attack of the blues now and then, d'ye see? 'It ain't all gold that glitters.' You've heard o' that proverb, no doubt?"

"Well, yes," replied Clazie.

"Ah Then there's another sayin' which mayhap you've heard of too: 'every man's got a skeleton in the cupboard.'"

"I've heard o' that likewise," said Clazie, "but it ain't true; leastways, *I* have got no skeleton in none o' my cupboards, an', wot's more, if I 'ad, I'd pitch him overboard."

"But what if he was too strong for you?" suggested Ned.

"Why, then—I don't know," said Clazie, shaking his head.

Before this knotty point could be settled in a satisfactory manner, the comrades were interrupted by the entrance of a man. He was a thick-set, ill-favoured fellow, with garments of a disreputable appearance, and had a slouch that induced honest men to avoid his company. Nevertheless, Ned Crashington gave him a hearty "good afternoon," and shook hands.

"My brother-in-law, Clazie," said Ned, turning and introducing him, "Mr. Sparks."

Clazie was about to say he "was 'appy to," etc. but thought better of it, and merely nodded as he turned to the grate and shook the ashes out of his pipe.

"You'll come and have a cup of tea, Phil? Maggie and I usually have it about this time."

Phil Sparks said he had no objection to tea, and left the station with Ned, leaving David Clazie shaking his head with a look of profound wisdom.

"You're a bad lot, you are," growled David, after the man was gone, "a werry bad lot, indeed!"

Having expressed his opinion to the clock, for there was no one else present, David thrust both hands into his pockets, and went out to take an observation of the weather.

Meanwhile Ned Crashington led his brother-in-law to his residence, which, like the abodes of the other firemen, was close at hand. Entering it he found his "skeleton" waiting for him in the shape of his wife. She was anything but a skeleton in aspect, being a stout, handsome woman, with a fine figure, an aquiline nose, and glittering black eyes.

"Oh, you've come at last," she said in a sharp, querulous tone, almost before her husband had

entered the room. "Full ten minutes late, and I expected you sooner than usual to-night."

"I didn't know you expected me sooner, Maggie. Here's Phil come to have tea with us."

"Oh, Phil, how are you?" said Mrs. Crashington, greeting her brother with a smile, and shaking him heartily by the hand.

"Ah, if you'd only receive *me* with a smile like that, *how* different it might be," thought Ned; but he *said* nothing.

"Now, then, stoopid," cried Mrs. Crashington, turning quickly round on her husband, as if to counteract the little touch of amiability into which she had been betrayed, "how long are you going to stand there in people's way staring at the fire? What are you thinking of?"

"I was thinking of you, Maggie."

"H'm! thinking no good of me, I dare say," replied Maggie, sharply.

"Did your conscience tell you that?" asked Ned, with a heightened colour.

Maggie made no reply. One secret of her bad temper was that she had all her life been allowed to vent it, and now that she was married she felt the necessity of restraining it very irksome. Whenever she had gone far enough with Ned, and saw that he

was not to be trifled with, she found that she possessed not only power to control her temper, but the sense, now and then, to do so! On the present occasion she at once busied herself in preparing tea, while Ned sat down opposite his brother-in-law, and, taking Fred, his only child, a handsome boy of about five years of age, on his knee, began to run his fingers through his jet black curly hair.

"Did you get your tasks well to-day, Fred?" asked Ned.

"No, father."

"No?" repeated Ned in surprise; "why not?"

"Because I was playin' with May Dashwood, father."

"Was that a good reason for neglecting your dooty?" demanded Ned, shaking his head reproachfully, yet smiling in spite of himself.

"Iss, father," replied the boy boldly.

"You're wrong, Fred. No doubt you might have had a worse reason, but *play* is not a good reason for neglect of dooty. Only think—what would be said to me if I was called to a fire, and didn't go because I wanted to play with May Dashwood?"

"But I was sent for," pleaded Fred. "Mrs. Dashwood had a big—oh, *such* a big washin', an' sent to

say if I might be let go ; an' mother said I might, so I went."

"Ah, that alters the case, Fred," replied his father, patting the boy's head. "To help a woman in difficulties justifies a'most anything Don't it, Phil?"

Thus appealed to, Phil said that he didn't know, and, what was more, he didn't care.

"Now don't sit talkin' nonsense, but sit in to tea," said Mrs. Crashington.

The stout fireman's natural amiability had been returning like a flood while he conversed with Fred, but this sharp summons rather checked its flow ; and when he was told in an exasperating tone to hand the toast, and not look like a stuck pig, it was fairly stopped, and his spirit sank to zero.

"Have you got anything to do yet?" he asked of Phil Sparks, by way of cheering up a little.

"No, nothin'," replied Sparks ; "leastways nothin' worth mentionin'."

"I *knew* his last application would fail," observed Maggie, in a quietly contemptuous tone.

His last application had been made through Ned's influence and advice, and that is how she came to *know* it would fail.

Ned felt a rising of indignation within him which

he found it difficult to choke down, because it was solely for his wife's sake that he had made any effort at all to give a helping hand to surly Phil Sparks, for whom he entertained no personal regard. But Ned managed to keep his mouth shut. Although a passionate man, he was not ill-tempered, and often suffered a great deal for the sake of peace.

"London," growled Sparks, in a tone of sulky remonstrance, "ain't a place for a man to git on in. If you've the luck to have friends who can help you, an' are willin', why it's well enough; but if you haven't got friends, its o' no manner o' use to try anything, except pocket-pickin' or house-break-in'."

"Come, Phil," said Ned, laughing, as he helped himself to a huge round of buttered toast, "I 'ope you han't made up your mind to go in for either of them professions, for they don't pay. They entail hard work, small profits, an' great risk—not to mention the dishonesty of 'em. But I don't agree with you about London neither."

"You never agree with nobody about anythink," observed Mrs. Crashington, in a low tone, as if the remark were made to the teapot; but Ned heard it, and his temper was sorely tried again, for, while the remark was utterly false as regarded himself, it was

particularly true as regarded his wife. However, he let it pass, and continued—

“You see, Phil, London, as you know, is a big place, the population of it being equal to that of all Scotland—so I’m told, though it ain’t easy to swallow that. Now it seems to me that where there’s so many people an’ so much doin’, it ought to be the very place for smart, stout fellows like you. If I was you, I’d——”

“Yes, but you *ain’t* him,” interrupted Mrs. Crashington, testily, “so it won’t do him much good to tell what you would or wouldn’t do.”

“I’ve heard of wives, Maggie, who *sometime* had to be agreeable,” said Ned, gravely.

“If I don’t suit you why did you marry me?” demanded Maggie.

“Ah, why indeed?” said Ned, with a frown.

At this critical point in the conversation, Little Fred, who was afraid that a storm was on the point of bursting forth, chanced to overturn his tin mug of tea. His mother was one of those obtuse women who regard an accident as a sin, to be visited by summary punishment. Her usual method of inflicting punishment was by means of an open-handed slap on the side of the head. On this occasion she dealt out the measure of justice with such good-will, that

poor little Fred was sent sprawling and howling on the floor.

This was too much for Ned, who was a tender-hearted man. The blood rushed to his face; he sprang up with such violence as to overturn his chair, seized his cap, and, without uttering a word, dashed out of the room, and went downstairs three steps at a time.

What Ned meant to do, or where to go, of course no one could tell, for he had no definite intentions in his own mind, but his energies were unexpectedly directed for him. On rushing out at the street door, he found himself staggering unexpectedly in the arms of Bob Clazie.

"Hullo! Bob, what's up?"

"Turn out!" said Bob, as he wheeled round, and ran to the next fireman's door.

Ned understood him. He ran smartly to the station, and quickly put on helmet, belt, and axe. Already the engine was out, and the horses were being harnessed. In two minutes the men were assembled and accoutred; in three they were in their places—the whip cracked, and away they went.

It was a good blazing, roaring, soul-stirring fire—a dry-salter's warehouse, with lots of inflammable materials to give it an intense heart of heat, and fanned by a pretty stiff breeze into ungovernable fury—yet it

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was as nothing to the fire that raged in Ned's bosom. If he had hated his wife, or been indifferent to her, he would in all probability, like too many husbands, have sought for congenial society elsewhere, and would have been harsh to her when obliged to be at home. But Ned loved his wife, and would have made any sacrifice, if by so doing, he could have smoothed her into a more congenial spirit. When, therefore, he found that his utmost efforts were of no avail, and that he was perpetually goaded, and twitted, and tweaked for every little trifle, his spirit was set alight—as he at last remarked in confidence to David Clazie—and all the fire engines in Europe, Asia, Africa and America couldn't put it out.

The drysalter's premises seemed to have been set on fire for poor Ned's special benefit that night. They suited his case exactly. There was more than the usual quantity of smoke to suffocate, and fire to roast, him. There was considerable danger too, so that the daring men of the brigade were in request—if we may say that of a brigade in which *all* the men were daring—and Ned had congenial work given him to do. The proverbial meeting of Greek with Greek was mere child's play to this meeting of fire with fire. The inflamed Ned and the blazing drysalter met in mortal conflict, and the result was tremendous! It made his brother

firemen stand aghast with awful admiration, to observe the way in which Ned dashed up tottering staircases, and along smoke-choked passages, where lambent flames were licking about in search of oxygen to feed on, and the way in which he hurled down brick walls and hacked through wood partitions, and tore up fir-planking and seized branch and hose, and, dragging them into hole-and-corner places, and out upon dizzy beams, and ridge poles, dashed tons of water in the fire's face, until it hissed again. It was a fine example of the homœopathic principle that "like cures like;" for the fire in Ned's bosom did wonders that night in the way of quenching the fire in the drysalter's warehouse.

When this had gone on for an hour, and the fire was at its height, Ned, quite exhausted, descended to the street, and, sitting down on the pavement, leaned against a rail.

"If you goes on like that, Ned," said Bob Clazie, coming up to him, "you'll bust yourself."

"I wish I could," said Ned.

At that moment, Bob's brother David came towards them with the brandy bottle.

"Have a glass, Ned, you need it," said David.

Ned, although not a teetotaller, was one of the men who did not require spirits, and therefore seldom

took more than a sip, but he now seized the glass and drained it eagerly.

"Another," he cried, holding it up.

David refilled it with a look of some surprise.

Ned drained it a second time.

"Now," said he, springing up, and tightening his belt, "I'm all right, come along, Bob!"

With that he rushed into the burning house, and in a few seconds was seen to take the branch from a fireman on one of the upper floors, and drag it out on a charred beam that overhung the fire. The spot on which they stood was brilliantly illuminated, and it was seen that the fireman remonstrated with Ned, but the latter thrust him away, and stepped out on the beam. He stood there black as ebony, with a glowing back-ground of red walls and fire, and the crowd cheered him for his unwonted courage; but the cheer was changed abruptly into a cry of alarm as the beam gave way, and Ned fell head foremost into the burning ruins.

The chief of the brigade—distinguishable everywhere by his tall figure—observed the accident, and sprang towards the place.

"If he's not killed by the fall, he's safe from the fire, for it is burnt out there," he remarked to David Clazie, who accompanied him. Before they reached

the place, Joe Dashwood and two other men had rushed in. They found Ned lying on his back in a mixture of charcoal and water, almost buried in a mass of rubbish which the falling beam had dragged down along with it. In a few seconds this was removed, and Ned was carried out and laid on the pavement, with a coat under his head.

"There's no cut anywhere that I can see," said Joe Dashwood examining him.

"His fall must have been broke by goin' through the lath and plaster o' the celin' below," suggested Bob Clazie.

At that moment, there was a great crash, followed by a loud cry, and a cheer from the multitude, as the roof fell in, sending up a magnificent burst of sparks and flame, in the midst of which Ned Crashington was borne from the field of battle.

While this scene was going on, Mrs. Crashington and her brother were still seated quietly enjoying their tea—at least, enjoying it as much as such characters can be said to enjoy anything.

When Ned had gone out, as before mentioned, Phil remarked:—

"I woun'dn't rouse him like that, Mag, if I was you."

"But he's so aggravatin'," pleaded Mrs. Crashington.

"He ain't half so aggravatin' as *you* are," replied Phil, gruffly. I don't understand your temper at all. You take all the hard words *I* give you as meek as a lamb, but if *he* only offers to open his mouth you fly at him like a turkey-cock. However, it's no business o' mine, and now," he added, rising, "I must be off."

"So, you won't tell me before you go, what sort of employment you've got?"

"No," replied Phil, shortly.

"Why not, Phil?"

"Because I don't want you to know, and I don't want your husband to know."

"But I won't tell him, Phil."

"I'll take good care you can't tell him," returned Phil, as he fastened a worsted comforter round his hairy throat. "It's enough for you to know that I ain't starvin' and that the work pays, though it ain't likely to make my fortin'."

Saying this, Mr. Sparks condescended to give his sister a brief nod and left the house.

He had not been gone much more than a couple of hours, when Mrs. Crashington, having put little Fred to sleep, was roused from a reverie by the sound of several footsteps outside, followed by a loud ring at the bell; she opened the door quickly, and her husband was borne in and laid on his bed.

"Not dead?" exclaimed the woman in a voice of agony.

"No, missus, not dead," said David Clazie, "but hardly better I fear."

When Maggie looked on the poor bruised form, with garments torn to shreds, and so covered with charcoal, water, lime, and blood, as to be almost an indistinguishable mass, she could not have persuaded herself that he was alive, had not a slight heaving of the broad chest told that life still remained.

"It's a 'orrible sight that, missus," said David Clazie, with a look that seemed strangely stern.

"It is—oh it is—terrible!" said Mrs. Crashington, scarce able to suppress a cry.

"Ah, you'd better take a good look at it," added Clazie, "for it's your own doing, missus."

Maggie looked at him in surprise, but he merely advised her to lend a hand to take the clothes off, as the doctor would be round in a minute; so she silently but actively busied herself in such duties as were necessary.

Meanwhile Phil Sparks went about the streets of London attending to the duties of his own particular business. To judge from appearances, it seemed to be rather an easy occupation, for it consisted mainly in walking at a leisurely pace through the streets and

thoroughfares, with his hands in his pockets and a pipe in his mouth.

Meditation also appeared to be an important branch of this business, for Phil frequently paused in front of a large mansion, or a magnificent shop, and gazed at it so intently, that one might have almost fancied he was planning the best method of attempting a burglary, although nothing was farther from Phil's intentions. Still, his meditations were sometimes so prolonged, that more than one policeman advised him, quite in a friendly way, to "move on."

Apparently, however, Phil turned over no profit, on this business, and was about to return home supperless to bed, when he suddenly observed smoke issuing from an upper window. Rare and lucky chance! He was the first to observe it. He knew that the first who should convey the alarm of fire to a fire-station would receive a shilling for his exertions. He dashed off at once, had the firemen brought to the spot in a few minutes, so that the fire was easily and quickly overcome. Thus honest Phil Sparks earned his supper, and the right to go home and lay his head on his pillow, with the happy consciousness of having done a good action to his fellow-men, and performed a duty to the public and himself.

CHAPTER IV

It is probable that there is not in all the wide world a man—no matter how depraved, or ill-favoured, or unattractive—who cannot find some sympathetic soul, some one who will be glad to see him and find more or less pleasure in his society. Coarse in body and mind though Philip Sparks was, there dwelt a young woman, in one of the poorest of the poor streets in the neighbourhood of Thames Street, who loved him, and would have laid down her life for him.

To do Martha Reading justice, she had fallen in love with Sparks before intemperance had rendered his countenance repulsive and his conduct brutal. When, perceiving the power he had over her, he was mean enough to borrow and squander the slender gains she made by the laborious work of dress-making—compared to which coal-heaving must be mere child's play—she experienced a change in her feelings towards him, which she could not easily understand

or define. Her thoughts of him were mingled with intense regrets and anxieties, and she looked forward to his visits with alarm. Yet those thoughts were not the result of dying affection; she felt quite certain of that, having learned from experience that "many waters cannot quench love."

One evening, about eight o'clock, Phil Sparks, having prosecuted his "business" up to that hour without success, tapped at the door of Martha's garret and entered without waiting for permission; indeed, his tapping at all was a rather unwonted piece of politeness.

"Come in, Phil," said Martha, rising and shaking hands, after which she resumed her work.

"You seem busy to-night," remarked Sparks, sitting down on a broken chair beside the fireless grate, and taking out his bosom companion, a short black pipe, which he began to fill.

"I am always busy," said Martha, with a sigh.

"An' it don't seem to agree with you, to judge from your looks," rejoined the man.

This was true. The poor girl's pretty face was thin and very pale and haggard.

"I was up all last night," she said, "and feel tired now, and there's not much chance of my getting to bed to-night either, because the lady for whom I am

making this *must* have it by to-morrow afternoon at latest."

Here Mr. Sparks muttered something very like a malediction on ladies in general, and on ladies who "*must*" have dresses in particular.

"Your fire's dead out, Martha," he added, poking among the ashes in search of a live ember.

"Yes, Phil, it's out. I can't afford fire of an evening; besides it ain't cold just now."

"You can afford matches, I suppose," growled Phil; "ah, here they are. Useful things matches, not only for lightin' a feller's pipe with, but also for — well; so she *must* have it by to-morrow afternoon, must she?"

"Yes, so my employer tells me."

"An' she'll not take no denial, won't she?"

"I believe not," replied Martha, with a faint smile, which, like a gleam of sunshine on a dark landscape, gave indication of the brightness that might have been if grey clouds of sorrow had not overspread her sky.

"What's the lady's name, Martha?"

"Middleton."

"And w'ereabouts may she live?"

"In Conway Street, Knightsbridge."

"The number?"

"No. 6, I believe; but why are you so particular in your inquiries about her?" said Martha, looking up for a moment from her work, while the faint gleam of sunshine again flitted over her face.

"Why, you see, Martha," replied Phil, gazing through the smoke of his pipe with a sinister smile, "it makes a feller feel koorious to hear the partiklers about a lady wot *must* have things, an' won't take no denial! If I was you, now, I'd disappoint her, an' see how she'd take it."

He wound up his remark, which was made in a bantering tone, with another malediction, which was earnest enough—savagely so.

"Oh! Phil," cried the girl, in an earnest tone of entreaty; "don't, oh, don't swear so. It is awful to think that God hears you, is near you—at your very elbow—while you thus insult Him to his face."

The man made no reply, but smoked with increasing intensity, while he frowned at the empty fire-place.

"Well, Martha," he said, after a prolonged silence, "I've got work at last."

"Have you?" cried the girl, with a look of interest.

"Yes; it ain't much to boast of, to be sure, but it pays, and, as it ties me to nothin' an' nobody, it suits my taste well. I'm wot you may call a' appendage o'

the fire brigade. I hangs about the streets till I sees a fire, w'en, off I goes full split to the nearest fire-station, calls out the engine, and gits the reward for bein' first to give the alarm."

"Indeed," said Martha, whose face, which had kindled up at first with pleasure, assumed a somewhat disappointed look; "I—I fear you won't make much by that, Phil?"

"You don't seem to make much by *that*," retorted Phil, pointing with the bowl of his pipe to the dress which lay in her lap and streamed in a profusion of rich folds down to the floor.

"Not much," assented Martha, with a sigh.

"Well, then," continued Phil, re-lighting his pipe, and pausing occasionally in his remarks to admire the bowl, "that bein' so, you and I are much in the same fix, so if we unites our small incomes, of course that'll make 'em just double the size."

"Phil," said Martha, in a lower voice, as she let her hands and the work on which they were engaged fall on her lap, "I think, now, that it will never be."

"What'll never be?" demanded the man rudely, looking at the girl in surprise.

"Our marriage."

"What! are you going to jilt me?"

"Heaven forbid," said Martha, earnestly. "But

you and I are not as we once were, Phil, we differ on many points. I feel sure that our union would make us more miserable than we are."

"Come, come," cried the man, half in jest and half in earnest. "This kind of thing will never do. You mustn't joke about that old girl, else I'll have you up for breach of promise."

Mr. Sparks rose as he spoke, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, put it in his waistcoat pocket, and prepared to go.

"Martha," he said, "I'm goin' off now to attend to my business, but I haven't made a rap yet to-day, and it's hard working on a empty stomach, so I just looked in to light my pipe, and enquire if you hadn't got a shillin' about you, eh!"

The girl looked troubled.

"Oh, very well," cried Sparks, with an offended air, "if you don't *want* to accommodate me, never mind, I can get it elsewhere."

"Stop!" cried Martha, taking a leathern purse from her pocket.

"Well, it *would* have been rather hard" — he was returning and holding out his hand.

"There, take it," said Martha. "You shouldn't judge too quickly. You don't know *why* I looked put out. It is my——"

She stopped short, and then said hurriedly, "Don't drink it, Phil."

"No, I won't. I'm hungry. I'll eat it. Thankee."

With a coarse laugh he left the room, and poor Martha sat down again to her weary toil, which was not in any degree lightened by the fact that she had just given away her last shilling.

A moment after, the door opened suddenly and Mr. Sparks looked in with a grin, which did not improve the expression of his countenance.

"I say, I wouldn't finish that dress to-night if I was you."

"Why not, Phil?" asked the girl in surprise.

"'Cause the lady won't want it to-morrow afternoon."

"How do you know that?"

"No matter. It's by means of a kind of second-sight I've got, that I find out a-many things. All I can say is that I've got a strong suspicion—a what d'ye call it—a presentiment that Mrs. Middleton, of No. 6, Conway Street, Knightsbridge, won't want her dress to-morrow, so I advise you to go to bed to-night."

Without waiting for a reply Mr. Sparks shut the door and descended to the street. Purchasing and

lighting a cheroot at the nearest tobacco shop with part of Martha's last shilling, he thrust his hands into his pockets, and sauntering along various small streets and squares, gave his undivided attention to business.

For a man whose wants were rather extensive and urgent, the "business" did not seem a very promising one. He glanced up at the houses as he sauntered along, appearing almost to expect that some of them would undergo spontaneous combustion for his special accommodation. Occasionally he paused and gazed at a particular house with rapt intensity, as if he hoped the light which flashed from his own eyes would set it on fire; but the houses being all regular bricks refused to flare up at such a weak insult.

Finding his way to Trafalgar Square, Mr. Sparks threw away the end of his cheroot, and, mending his pace, walked smartly along Piccadilly until he gained the neighbourhood of Knightsbridge. Here he purchased another cheroot, and while lighting it took occasion to ask if there was a street thereabouts named Conway Street.

"Yes, sir, there is," said a small and exceedingly pert crossing-sweeper, who chanced to be standing near the open door of the shop, and overheard the

question. "I'll show you the way for a copper, sir, but silver preferred if you're so disposed."

"Whereabouts is it?" asked Mr. Sparks of the shopman, regardless of the boy.

"Round the corner to your right, and after that second turning to your left."

"Oh, that's all wrong," cried the boy. "W'y, 'ow should 'ee know hanythink about streets? Never goes nowheres, does nothink but sell snuff an' pigtail, mornin', noon, and night. 'Ee should have said, *right* round the corner to your right, and 'ee should have added sir, for that's right w'en a gen'l'm'n's spoke to, arter w'ich, w'en you've left this 'ere street, take second turnin' to your left, if you'r left-'anded, an' then you come hall right. That's 'ow 'ee ought to have said it, sir."

In the midst of this flow of information, Mr. Sparks emerged into the street.

"I'll show you the way for love, sir, if you ain't got no money," said the boy in a tone of mock sincerity, stepping up and touching his cap.

"Let 'im alone, Bloater," cried another and smaller boy, "don't you see ee's one of the swell mo's, an' don't want to 'ave too much attention drawed to him?"

"No 'ee ain't, Little Jim, ee's only a gen'l'm'n in

disguise," replied the Bloater, sidling up to Mr. Sparks, and urgently repeating, "show you the way for a copper, sir, *only* a copper."

Mr. Sparks, being, as we have said, an irascible man, and particularly out of humour that evening, did not vouchsafe a reply, but, turning suddenly round, gave the Bloater a savage kick that turned him head over heels into the road.

The Bloater, whose proper name was Robert Herring, from which were derived the aliases, Raw Herring and the Bloater, immediately recovered himself and rushed at Mr. Sparks with his broom. He was a strong, resolute, passionate boy, yet withal good-humoured and placable. In the first burst of indignation he certainly meant to commit a violent assault, but he suddenly changed his mind. Perhaps the look and attitude of his antagonist had something to do with the change; perhaps the squeaky voice of Little Jim, shouting "hooray, Bloater, go in an' win," may have aroused his sense of the ludicrous, which was very strong, and helped to check him. At all events, instead of bringing his broom down on the head of Mr. Sparks, Bloater performed an impromptu war-dance round him and flourished his weapon with a rapidity that was only surpassed by the rapid flow of his language.

"Now then, Gunpowder, come on; wot do you mean by it—eh? You low-minded son of a pepper-caster! Who let you out o' the cruet-stand? Wot d'ee mean by raisin' yer dirty foot ag'in a *honest* man, w'ch *you* ain't, an' never was, an' never will be, an' never *could* be, seein' that both your respected parients was 'anged afore you was born. Come on, I say. You ain't a coward, air you? If so, I'll 'and you over to Little Jim 'ere, an' stand by to see fair play!"

During this outburst, Mr. Sparks had quietly faced the excited boy, watching his opportunity to make a dash at him, but the appearance of a policeman put a sudden termination to the riot by inducing the Bloater and Little Jim to shoulder their brooms and fly. Mr. Sparks, smiling grimly (he never smiled otherwise), thrust his hands into his pockets, resumed his cheroot, and held on the even tenor of his way.

But he had not yet done with the Bloater. That volatile and revengeful youth, having run on in advance, ensconced himself behind a projection at the corner of the street close to which Sparks had to pass, and from that point of vantage suddenly shot into his ear a yell so excruciating that it caused the man to start and stagger off the pavement; before he could

recover himself his tormentor had doubled round the corner and vanished.

Growling savagely, he continued his walk. One of the turns to the left which he had to make led him through a dark and narrow street. Here, keeping carefully in the middle of the road for security, he looked sharply on either side, having his hands out of his pockets now, and clenched, for he fully expected another yell. He was wrong, however, in his expectations. The Bloater happened to know of a long ladder, whose nightly place of repose was on the ground in a certain dark passage, with its end pointing across that street. Taking up a position beside this ladder, with Little Jim—who followed him, almost bursting with delight—he bided his time and kept as quiet as a mouse. Just in the nick of time the ladder was run out, and Mr. Sparks tripping over it, fell violently to the ground. He sprang up and gave chase of course, but he might as well have followed a will-o'-the-wisp. The young scamps, doubling like hares, took refuge in a dark recess under a stair with which they were well acquainted, and from that position they watched their enemy. They heard him go growling past; knew, a moment or two later, from the disappointed tone of the growl, that he had found the opening at the other end of the

passage; heard him return, growling, and saw him for a moment in the dim light of the entrance as he left the place. Then, swiftly issuing from their retreat, they followed.

"I say, Bloater," whispered Little Jim, "ee's got such an ugly mug that I do b'lieve 'ee's up to some game or other."

"P'raps 'ee is," returned the Bloater, meditatively; "we'll let 'im alone 'an foller 'im up."

The prolonged season of peace that followed, induced Mr. Sparks to believe that his tormentors had left him, he therefore dismissed them from his mind, and gave himself entirely to business. Arrived at Conway street, he found that it was one of those semi-genteel streets in the immediate neighbourhood of Kensington Gardens, wherein dwell thriving tradespeople who know themselves to be rising in the world, and unfortunate members of the "upper ten," who know that they have come down in the world, but have not ceased the struggle to keep up appearances. It was a quiet, unfrequented street, in which the hum of the surrounding city sounded like the roar of a distant cataract. Here Mr. Sparks checked his pace — stopped — and looked about him with evident caution.

"Ho, ho!" whispered little Jim

"We've tracked 'im down," replied the Bloater with a chuckle.

Mr. Sparks soon found No. 6. On the door a brass plate revealed "Mrs. Middleton."

"Ha! she *must* have it, must she, an' *won't* take no denial," muttered the man between his teeth.

Mr. Sparks observed that one of the lower windows was open, which was not to be wondered at, for the weather was rather warm at the time. He also observed that the curtains of the window were made of white flowered muslin, and that they swayed gently in the wind, not far from a couple of candles which stood on a small table. There was no one in the room at the time.

"Strange," muttered Mr. Sparks, with a grim smile, "that people *will* leave lights so near muslin curtains!"

Most ordinary people would have thought the candles in question at a sufficiently safe distance from the curtains, but Mr. Sparks apparently thought otherwise. He entertained peculiar views about the danger of fire.

From the position which the two boys occupied they could not see the man while he was thus engaged in examining and commenting on No. 6, Conway Street, but they saw him quite well when he

crossed the street (which had only one side to it, a wall occupying the other), and they saw him still better in the course of a few seconds when a bright light suddenly streamed towards him, and illumined his villanous countenance, and they heard as well as saw him, the next instant, when he shouted "*fire ! fire !*" and rushed frantically away.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the Bloater, and dashed off at full speed. Little Jim echoed the sentiment and followed.

Robert, alias Raw Herring, was a sharp-witted lad. He understood the case (partly at least) in a moment, and proceeded to appropriate action. Being intimately acquainted with that part of London, he took a short cut, overshot Mr. Sparks, and was first to give the alarm at the fire-station. When, therefore, Mr. Sparks ran in, panting and shouting "*fire !*" great was his surprise to find the men already roused, and the horses being attached to the engine.

"Where away?" inquired one of the firemen, supposing that Sparks, perhaps, brought information of another fire.

"No. 6, Conway Street," he gasped.

"All right, we've got the noos already. The boys brought it."

The Bloater, with a mouth extending from ear to

ear and all his teeth displayed, uttered the single word "sold!" as Mr. Sparks turned his eyes on him. One glance was enough. The man became very pale, and suddenly left the station amid a shout of laughter from the firemen, as they leaped on the engine and drove away, followed by the two boys whose spirits were already excited to the highest pitch of ecstasy by a fire.

It was early morning before the fire was subdued, and No. 6 left the blackened skeleton of a house. Long before that, the Bloater and Little Jim had sought repose in the cart-shed of a neighbouring stable. Long before that Mr. Philip Sparks had retired to rest, growling anathemas on the heads of boys in general, and crossing-sweepers in particular; and not *very* long before that poor Martha Reading had put in the last stitch of her work, and fallen into a profound sleep in her chair.

Mr Sparks turned out to be a true prophet. Mrs. Middleton did *not* insist on having her dress home that afternoon, and when Martha, true to her promise, conveyed it to No. 6, Conway Street, she found no one there to receive it except a few drenched men of the Red Brigade and the police.

CHAPTER V.

MR. PHILIP SPARKS, though not naturally fond of society, was, nevertheless, obliged to mingle occasionally with that unpleasant body, for the purpose of recruiting his finances. He would rather have remained at home and enjoyed his pipe and beer in solitude, but that was not possible in the circumstances. Owing, no doubt, to the selfishness of the age in which he lived, people would *not* go and pour money into his pockets, entreat him to accept of the same, and then retire without giving him any farther trouble. On the contrary, even when he went out and took a great deal of trouble to obtain money—much more trouble than he would have had to take, had he been an honest working man—people refused to give it him, but freely gave him a good deal of gratuitous advice instead, and sometimes threatened the donation of other favours which, in many instances, are said to be more numerous than ha'pence.

Things in general being in this untoward condition,

Mr. Sparks went out one morning and entered into society. Society did not regard him with a favourable eye, but Sparks was not thin-skinned; he persevered, being determined, come what might, to seek his fortune. Poor fellow, like many a man in this world who deems himself a most unlucky fellow, he had yet to learn the lesson that fortunes must be *wrought* for, not *sought* for, if they are to be found.

Finding society gruffer than usual that morning, and not happening to meet with his or anybody else's fortune in any of the streets through which he passed, he resolved to visit Martha Reading's abode; did so, and found her "not at home." With despairing disgust he then went to visit his sister.

Mrs. Crashington was obviously at home, for she opened the door to him, and held up her finger.

"Hallo, Mag!" exclaimed Sparks, a little surprised.

"Hush!" said Mrs. Crashington, admitting him, "speak low."

Thus admonished, Mr. Sparks asked in a hoarse whisper, "what was up?"

"Ned's had a bad fall, Phil," whispered Mrs. Crashington, in a tremulous tone that was so unlike her usual voice as to make Sparks look at her in surprise not unmingled with anxiety.

"You don't mean to say, Mag, that he's agoin' to—to—knock under?"

"I hope not, Phil, but—the doctor——"

Here the poor woman broke down altogether, and sobbed quietly as she led her brother through the house, and into the little bed-room where the injured fireman lay.

Ned's bruised, burned, and lacerated frame was concealed under a patchwork coverlet. Only his face was visible, but that, although the least injured part of his body, was so deadly pale that even Mr. Sparks was solemnized by the supposition that he was in the presence of Death.

"Oh, Ned, Ned!" exclaimed Maggie, unable to repress her grief, "can you—*can* you ever forgive me?"

She laid her hand on the fireman's broad breast, and passionately kissed his brow.

He opened his eyes, and whispered with difficulty, "Forgive you, Maggie? God for ever bless you." He could say no more, owing to excessive weakness.

"Come, missus, you musn't disturb him," said David Clazie, emerging from behind the curtains at the foot of the bed. "The doctor's orders was strict—to keep 'im quiet. You'd better go into the other

room, an' your brother likewise. Pr'aps you might send 'im to tell Joe Dashwood to be ready."

David Clazie, who was more a man of action than of words, quietly, but firmly, ejected the brother and sister from the little room while he was speaking, and, having shut the door, sat down at his post again as a guard over his sick comrade.

"Seems to me it's all up with 'im," observed Sparks, as he stood gazing uneasily into the fire.

As Mrs. Crashington replied only by sobbing, he continued, after a few minutes—

"Does the doctor say it's all up, Mag?"

"No, oh no," replied the poor woman, "he don't quite say so; but I can't git no comfort from that. Ned has lost *such* a quantity of blood, it seems impossible for him to git round. They're goin' to try a operation on 'im to-day, but I can't understand it, an' don't believe in it. They talk of puttin' noo blood into 'im! An' that reminds me that the doctor is to be here at twelve. Do run round, Phil, to the Dashwoods, and tell Joe to be here in good time."

"What's Joe wanted for?"

"Never mind, but go and tell him that. I can't talk just now," she said, pushing her brother out of the room.

Tapping at Joe Dashwood's door, Phil received

from a strong, deep voice permission to "come in." He entered, and found a very different state of things from that which he had just left. A bright room, and bright, happy faces. The windows were bright, which made the light appear brighter than usual; the grate was bright; the furniture was bright; the face of the clock, whose interior seemed about to explode on every occasion of striking the hour, was bright—almost to smiling; and the pot-lids, dishcovers, etc., were bright—so bright as to be absolutely brilliant. Joe Dashwood and his little wife were conversing near the window, but, although their faces were unquestionably bright by reason of contentment, coupled with a free use of soap and the jack-towel, there was, nevertheless, a shade of sadness in their looks and tones. Nothing of the sort, however, appeared on the countenances of the Rosebud and young Fred Crashington. These gushing little offshoots of the Red Brigade were too young to realize the danger of Ned's condition, but they were quite old enough to create an imaginary fire in the cupboard, which they were wildly endeavouring to extinguish with a poker for a "branch" and a bucket for a fire-engine, when Mr. Sparks entered.

"Oh! kik, Feddy, kik; put it out kik, or it'll bu'n down all 'e house," cried little May, eagerly, as she

tossed back a cataract of golden curls from her flushed countenance, and worked away at the handle of the bucket with all her might.

"All right!" shouted Fred, who had been sent to play with the Rosebud that he might be out of the way. "Down with No. 1; that's your sort; keep 'er goin'; hooray!"

He brought the poker down with an awful whack on the cupboard at this point, causing the crockery to rattle again.

"Hallo! youngster, mind what you're about," cried Joe, "else there will be more damage caused by the engine than the fire—not an uncommon thing, either, in our practice!"

It was at this point that he replied to Mr. Sparks's knock.

"Come in, Mr. Sparks, you've heard of your poor brother-in-law's accident, I suppose?"

"Yes, I've just come from his house with a message. You're wanted to be there in good time."

"All right, I'll be up to time," said Joe, putting on his coat and cap, and smiling to his wife, as he added, "It's a queer sort o' thing to do. We'll be blood-relations, Ned and I, after this. Look after these youngsters, Molly, else they'll knock your crockery to bits. Good day, Mr. Sparks."

"Good day," replied Sparks, as Joe went out. Then, turning to Mrs. Dashwood, "What sort of operation is it they're goin' to perform on Ned?"

"Did you not hear? It's a very curious one. Ned has lost so much blood from a deep cut in his leg that the doctors say he can't recover, no matter how strong his constitution is, unless he gits some blood put into him, so they're goin' to put some o' my Joe's blood into him."

"What!" exclaimed Sparks, "take blood out o' your husband and put it hot and livin' into Ned? No, no, I've got a pretty big swallow, but I can't git *that* down."

"If you can't swallow it you'll have to bolt it, then, for it's a fact," returned Mary, with a laugh.

"But how do they mean to go about it?" asked Sparks, with an unbelieving expression of countenance.

"Well, I ain't quite sure about that," replied Mary; "they say that the doctor cuts a hole in a vein of the arms of both men, and puts a pipe or something of that sort into the two veins, and so lets the blood run from the one man into the other. I don't half believe it myself, to say truth; but it's quite true that they're goin' to try it on Ned. The

doctor says it has bin tried before with great success, and that the main thing is to get a stout, healthy young man to take the blood from. They thought, at first, to get a healthy youth from the country, but my Joe begged so hard to let him supply his friend and comrade with what they wanted, that they agreed, and now he's off to have it done. Ain't it funny?"

"Funny!" exclaimed Sparks, "well, it is, just. But I'm not such a fool as to believe that they can pump the blood out o' one man into another in that fashion."

"I hope they can for poor Ned's sake," said Mary, in a sad tone, as she stirred a large pot which stood simmering on the fire.

There was a short silence after that, for Mary was thinking of the strange operation that was probably going on at that moment, and Phil Sparks was debating with himself as to the propriety of attempting to induce Mrs. Dashwood to lend him a shilling or two. He could not easily make up his mind, however; not because he was ashamed to ask it, but, because he was afraid of receiving a rebuke from the pretty little woman. He knew that she and Martha Reading were intimate friends, and he had a suspicion that Mrs. Dashwood was aware of Martha's fondness

for him, and that she bore him no good will in consequence. Besides, although one of the sweetest tempered women in London, Mary was one whose indignation could be roused, and whose clear blue eye had something overawing in it, especially to scoundrels. He therefore sat there more than an hour, conversing on various subjects, while Mary busied herself in household matters, which she occasionally left off in order to assist in extinguishing the fire in the cupboard !

At last Sparks resolved to make the attempt, and thought he would begin by trying to propitiate Mary by commenting on her child.

"That's a pretty little girl of yours, missis," he remarked in a casual way.

"That she is," cried Mary, catching up the child and kissing her rosy face all over; "and she's better than pretty—she's good, good as gold."

"Oh 'top, ma. Let May down, kik! Fire not out yit!"

"That's right, never give in, May. Wot a jolly fireman you'd make!" cried Fred, still directing all his energies to the cupboard.

"That's a queer sort o' helmet the boy's got on," said Sparks, alluding to a huge leathern headpiece, of a curious old-fashioned form, which was rolling

about on the boy's head, being much too large for him.

"It was bought for him by my Joe, in an old curiosity shop," said Mary.

"Ha!" replied Sparks. "Well, Missis Dashwood, I'll have to be goin', though I haven't got no business to attend to—still, a man must keep movin' about, you know, specially w'en he's had no breakfast, an' han't got nothin' to buy one."

"That's a sad condition," said Mary, pursing her lips, for she knew the man.

"It is, missis. You couldn't lend me half-a-crown, could you?"

"No, I couldn't," replied the little woman with decision, while her cheeks reddened; "moreover, I wouldn't if I could. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Sparks; it's a disgrace for a man of your strength and years to be goin' about borrowing as you're in the habit of doin'; and you have got the impudence, too, to be running after poor Martha Reading, but you shall never get her if I can prevent it."

Mr. Sparks was much nettled by the first part of Mrs. Dashwood's speech. The last part put him in a towering passion. He started up, but had the wisdom to restrain himself to some extent.

"Perhaps," he said, between his teeth, "you *can't* prevent it, missis."

"Perhaps not, but I shall try."

At that moment, Master Fred Crashington chanced to stumble in his energetic attempts to extinguish the fire in the cupboard, which the Rosebud assured him, in excited tones, was "not out yit; gittin' wus an' wus!" In falling, the old fashioned helmet flew off, and the comb of it hit Mr. Sparks a severe blow on the shin-bone. In the heat of the moment he dealt Fred a violent slap on the cheek, which sent him tumbling and howling on the floor. At that moment the door opened and Joe Dashwood entered.

He had heard the noise before entering, and now stood with a stern frown on his face as he gazed at his wife and her visitor.

"Did *you* do that?" he demanded of Sparks, pointing to the little boy.

"He did, Joe," said Mary; "but——"

Joe waited for no more. He seized Mr. Sparks by the nape of the neck with a grip that almost choked him—strong though he was—and thrust him out of the room, down the stairs, and out into the street, where he gave him a final kick, and shut the door.

"Oh, dear Joe!" exclaimed Mary, on his return, "you shouldn't have been so violent to 'im."

"W'y not, Molly? Surely you would not have me stand by and look on while he insulted you and knocked down the boy?"

"No, but it would have been a better rebuke if you had ordered him off quietly. No good ever comes of violence, Joe, and he's such a spiteful, vindictive man that he will never forgive you—perhaps he'll do you a mischief if he ever gets the chance."

"I hope he will never get the chance," replied Joe.

"I hope not, but I fear him," said Mary. "But tell me, Joe, how has the operation succeeded?"

"First-rate, Molly. Ned and I are blood relations now! I don't know how much they took out o' me, but it don't signify, for I am none the worse, an' poor Ned seems much the better."

Here Joe entered into a minute detail of all that had been done—how a puncture had been made in one of the veins of his arm, and another in one of the veins of Ned's arm; and how the end of a small tube with a bulb in the middle of it had been inserted into *his* puncture, and the other end into *Ned's* puncture, and the blood pumped, as it were, from the full-blooded man into the injured man until it was supposed that he had had enough of it; and how Ned had already shown signs of revival while he (Joe) didn't feel the loss at all, as was made abundantly

evident by the energetic manner in which he had kicked Mr. Sparks out of his house after the operation was over.

To all this Mary listened with wide open eyes, and Fred Crashington listened with wider open eyes; and little Rosebud listened with eyes and mouth equally open—not that she understood anything of it, but because the others were in that condition.

"Now, May, my pet," cried the fireman, catching up his little one and tossing her in the air, "Ned, that is so fond of you, is a blood-relation, so you may call him 'uncle' next time he comes—uncle Ned!"

"Unkil Ned," lisped the Rosebud.

"And me cousin," chimed in Fred.

"Iss—cuzn," responded May.

"Just so," cried Joe, seizing Fred round the waist and tossing him on his right shoulder—Rosebud being already on his left—"come, I'll carry you down the fire-escape now; hurrah! down we go."

How long Joe would have gone on playing with the children we cannot say, for he was interrupted by the entrance of Bob and David Clazie.

"Come along, Joe," said the latter, "it's your turn to go along with us to drill."

"It's 'ard work to 'ave to go playin' at fires doorin'

the day, an' puttin' of 'em out doorin' the night, Joe ; ain't it ? " said Bob Clazie.

" So 'tis Bob, but it must be done, you know. Duty first, pleasure afterwards," replied Joe, with a laugh. " Besides, the green hands could never learn how to do it if they hadn't some of the old uns to show 'em the way."

" Hall right," replied Bob ; " come along."

They left the room with a hearty " good-day " to Mrs. Dashwood, and a nod to the children.

Putting on the round sailor's caps which replaced the helmets when they were not on actual service, the three firemen took their way towards the city, and finally reached a large piece of open ground, where a number of very old houses had been partly pulled down, to be soon replaced by new ones. The Fire Brigade had obtained permission to perform their drill there until the ground should be required.

It was a curious waste place in the heart of the great city, with rubbish cumbering the ground in front of the half demolished houses. Here several ungainly fire-escapes leaned against the ruined walls, and thrust their heads through broken windows, or stood on the ground, rampant, as if eager to have their heads crammed into smoke and flames. Here also were several manual engines, with their appropriate gearing and hose, and

near to these were grouped a band of as fine, fresh, muscular young fellows as one could wish to see. These were the new hands of the brigade—the young men, recently engaged, who were undergoing drill. Each was a picked, and, to some extent, a proved man. The lightest and least powerful among these men was a sturdy, courageous fellow. He, like the others, had been tried at an old fire-escape which stood in a corner of the yard, and which was unusually large and cumbrous. If he had failed to “work” various portions of that escape single-handed, without assistance, he would have been pronounced physically unfit for the service. Courage and strength alone would not have been sufficient. Weight, to a certain extent, was essential.

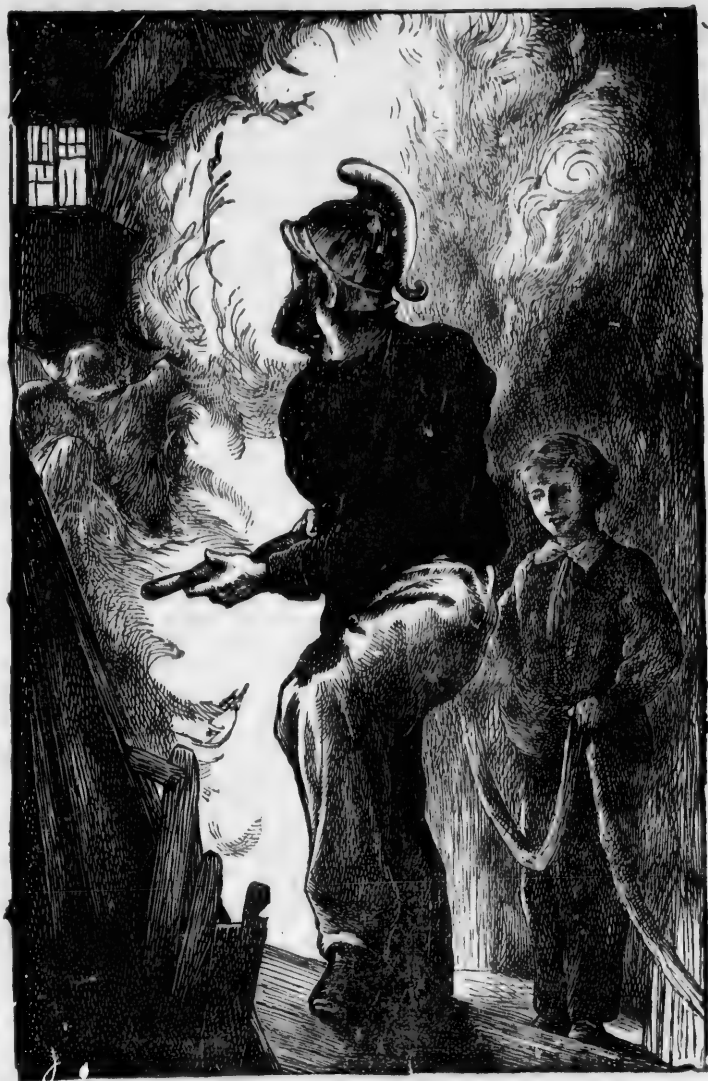
Among these youths were several of the older hands, and one or two officers of the brigade, the latter being distinguished by brass ornaments or “brasses” on their shoulders. They were there to superintend and direct. In the midst of them stood their chief, explaining the minutiae of the work they had to do.

When our three firemen reached the drill-ground the chief was showing his recruits how to coil several lengths of the hose, so as to avoid a twist or “kink,” which might endanger its bursting when the water was turned suddenly on by the powerful “steamers.”

He then pointed to the tall empty buildings beside him and ordered his recruits to go into the third floor of the premises, drag up the hose, and bring the branch to bear on the back rooms, in which fire was supposed to be raging

"Look alive, now," he said, "see how quickly you'll manage it."

Instantly the active youths sprang to their work. Some got the hose out of the box of an engine and uncoiled it length by length towards the house, others screwed the lengths together at the same time that the water-trough was being set up and the suction pipe attached. Meanwhile, some had run up into the building, and from an upper window let down a rope so as to be ready to drag up the hose when it was made long enough to reach them. Thus they practised during the forenoon the mimic warfare with the flames which they should have to carry into actual operation at night. In another part of the yard a foreman was instructing some recruits in the use of the fire-escape. Under a neighbouring archway stood a small group of idlers looking on at these stirring operations, one of these was Philip Sparks, another was the Bloater. The interests of the first had taken him there, the second had been led to the scene by his affections. Sparks did not observe the Bloater, but the



JOE ENGAGED IN PRIVATE PRACTICE.

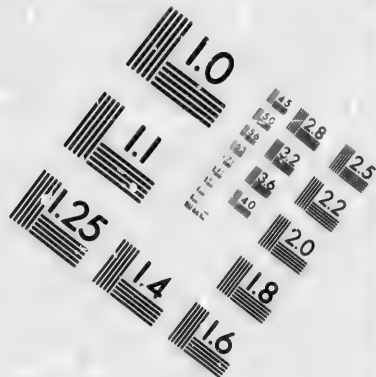
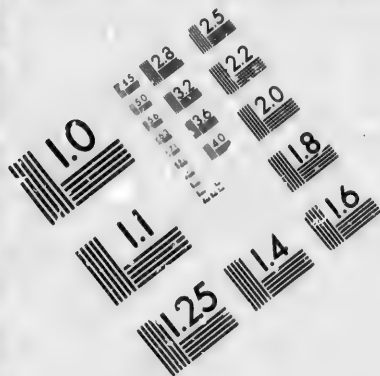
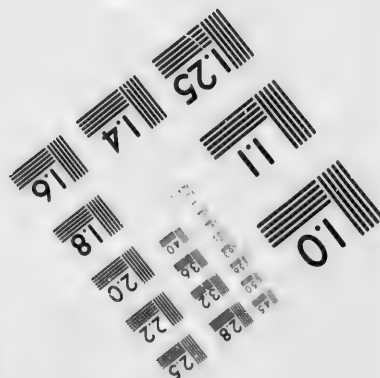
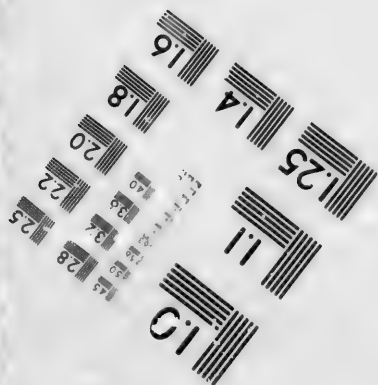
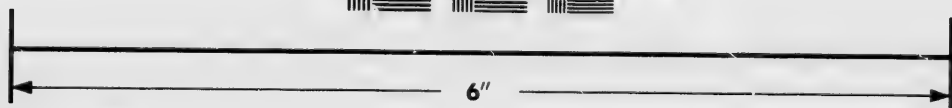
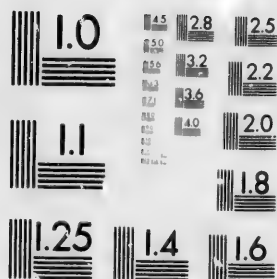
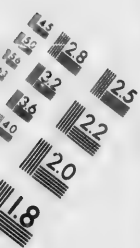


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Bloater being unusually sharp, had observed Sparks, and, with a look of surprise and glee at the unexpected sight, set himself to watch and listen.

"That's him," growled Sparks in a low whisper, pointing to Joe Dashwood as he entered the yard.

This was said to a dark-skinned, ill-looking, powerful man who stood at his elbow. The man nodded in reply.

"Take a good look at him, Jeff; you'll know him again?"

Jeff nodded and guessed that he would.

"Well, then, West End; Friday, at 12 p.m. Number 5, close to the fire-station. You won't forget?" whispered Sparks, as he and his ill-looking friend slunk away.

"I say," observed the Bloater, poking Little Jim in the ribs, and looking down at him with one eye shut, "you and I shall form an engagement for Friday night—shan't we."

Little Jim opened his eyes very wide, pressed his mouth very tight, and nodded his head violently.

"Well then," continued the Bloater, repeating Sparks's words in a deep stage whisper, "West End; Friday, at 12 p.m. Number 5, close to the fire-station. You won't forget?"

Little Jim again nodded his head, and uttered a

little shriek of delight. This attracted the notice of a policeman, who hinted, as delicately as possible, that the boys had better "move on."

They took the hint, and retired precipitately.

CHAPTER VI

Oh ! but it *was* an interesting occupation to watch the expression of little Jim's countenance, as the Bloater watched it, while the two boys were on their way to the "West End" that evening, bent on doing duty as amateur watchmen on "No. 5," close to the fire station.

"Your face ain't cherubic," observed the Bloater, looking down at his little friend. "If anythink, I should say it partakes of the diabolic; so you've got no occasion to make it wus than it is by twistin' it about like that. Wotever do you do it for?"

Little Jim replied by a sound which can only be represented by the letters "sk," pronounced in the summit of the nose.

"That ain't no answer," said the Bloater, with a knowing smile, the knowingness of which consisted chiefly in the corners of the mouth being turned down instead of up. This peculiarity, be it carefully observed, was natural to the Bloater, who scorned

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every species of affectation. Many of his young friends and admirers were wont to imitate this smile. If they could have seen the inconceivably idiotic expressions of their countenances when they tried it, they would never have made a second effort!

"Wot a jolly lark!" said little Jim, prefacing the remark with another "sk."

"Ha!" replied the Bloater, with a frown that implied the pressure of weighty matters on his mind.

After a few minutes' silence, during which the cherubic face of little Jim underwent various contortions, the Bloater said—

"If I ain't mistaken, Jim, you and I are sound of wind and limb?"

Jim looked up in surprise, and nodded assent.

"Besides wick," continued the Bloater, "we're rayther fleet than otherwise."

Again Jim nodded and grinned.

"No Bobby as ever stuck 'is hignorant hinsolent 'ead into a 'elmet ever could catch us."

"Sk!" ejaculated Jim, expanding from ear to ear.

"Well, then," continued the Bloater, becoming more grave and confidential, "it's my opinion, Jim, that you and I shall 'ave a run for it to-night. It's quite plain that our hamiable friend who seems so

fond o' fire-raisin' is goin' to pay 'is respects to No. 5. 'Avin' got it well alight it is just within the bounds o' the possible—not to say prob'ble—that 'e'll give 'em leg-bail—make tracks, as the Yankees say—cut and run for it. Well, in course it would never do to let 'im go off alone, or with only a 'eavy stoopid, conceited slow-coach of a Bobby at 'is tail."

"No, no," responded little Jim; "that would never do. Quite out of the question. 'Ighly himproper."

"Therefore," said the Bloater, with emphasis, "you and I shall 'ave to keep our heyes on 'im, shan't we?"

He put this concluding question with a wink of such astounding significance, that little Jim could only reply with another "sk!" as he stopped for a few moments to hug himself.

At the fire-station "close to No. 5," the firemen lounged about that evening with the air of men who, although they chanced to be idle at the moment, were nevertheless on the alert and ready for action at a noment's notice. Their large folding-doors stood open with an air of off-hand hospitality. A couple of engines stood within, glittering from excessive polish and cleanliness. Coils of hose and buckets, etc., were seen here and there in readiness, while in an interior room a glimpse might be had of gleaming brass

helmets, which hung in a row on the wall, each with an axe pendant below it; and, opposite to these, a row of dry boots arranged on pegs with their soles to the ceiling.

The two boys lingered about the station admiring all this, and commenting in their own peculiar fashion on men and things, sometimes approvingly, often critically, and now and then disparagingly. They sometimes ventured to address a remark or two to any of the men who chanced to look at them with a sufficiently good-humoured expression, and even went the length of asking Bob Clazie if, in the event of the Thames going on fire, " 'e thought 'e could manage to put it hout!" to which Bob replied that he thought he could if "cheek" were a fire-extinguisher, and he only had a brigade of boys equal to the Bloat'er to help him.

As the night advanced the firemen devoted themselves to pipes, draughts, and miscellaneous conversation in their back room, in which they were occasionally interrupted by the tingle of the telegraphic bell, to inform them that there was a chimney on fire in Holborn, to which they need pay no attention, even though "called" by an excited informer, because it was already being attended to, and didn't merit farther notice; or to let them know that there was a fire

raging in Whitechapel, which, although being most energetically looked after by the men of the brigade in its immediate neighbourhood, would be the better of aid, nevertheless, from *one* man from that station.

On such distant duty, Bob Clazie and his brother David were successively sent out in different directions during the first part of the night; but they returned in the course of an hour or so—Bob considerably dirtied and moistened in consequence of having had to go vigorously into action at the tail end of a fire, while David returned as he went, having found that *his* fire had been effectually got under before his arrival.

Only once during the night did a regular "call" reach the station. It was about eleven o'clock. Our youthful watchmen, feeling that the appointed hour was drawing nigh, had retired to the shade of a neighbouring court to avoid observation, when a man came tearing round the corner, dashed into the fire-station, tumbled over a bucket into the midst of the men, and yelled, "Fire!"

In three minutes the engine was out, the horses were attached, the men in their places, and away they went.

"Oh! let's follow," cried little Jim, enthusiastically, while his eyes glittered as if they, too, were on fire

The more sedate Bloater laid his hand heavily on his little friend's shoulder.

"No, Jim, no. Business fust, pleasure arterwards. We've got business on hand to-night."

Little Jim felt the force of the observation, and made what we may call a mighty effort—considering that he was such a mite of a thing—to restrain himself. His heroism was rewarded, for, in less than half an hour, the engine came rattling back again, its services not having been required! The fire had occurred close to the fire-escape, of which one of the men of that station had the charge that night. He had run to the fire with his escape at the first alarm, and had brought to bear on it the little hand fire-engine with which all the escapes are now provided. At that early stage in the fire, its little stream was more effectual than the flood from a powerful "steamer" would have been at a later period. The consequence was that the fire was got under at once, and, as we have said, the engine was not required.

"Wirtoo," observed the Bloater, sententiously, "is its own reward."

He pointed to the returning engine, and looked at little Jim with solemnity; whereupon Jim displayed all his teeth, nodded approval of the sentiment, and—"sk!"

"Little Jim," continued the Bloater, shaking his head gravely, "they do say—them as knows best, or thinks they does, which is all the same—that there's wit in silence; if so, it appears to me that you tries to be too witty at times."

"I dun know, Bob," replied Jim, with a meditative look, "much about wit bein' in silence. I only wish there was wittles in it. Oh! wouldn't I 'old my tongue, just, till I was fit to bust!"

"But there ain't wittles in it, Jim, nor nothin' else worth 'avin', so don't try it on too much to-night. You see, I'm a bit down-'arted about the thoughts o' this 'ere black business, an' feel the want of a cheerin' word now and agin to keep up my droopin' spirits, d'ye see; so don't stand grinnin' there like a Cheshire cat, else I'll——"

The Bloater terminated the sentence in action, by squeezing little Jim's cap over his eyes. He was still engaged in this act of pleasantry when Mr. Sparks and his friend Jeff appeared on the other side of the street. They walked smartly past the door of the fire-station, which was shut by that time, the men having retired to their various domiciles for the night, with the exception of the two on night duty. They stopped at the corner of the street, looked back, and stood as if conversing casually with each other.

Meanwhile, the two boys shrank out of sight, and gazed at them like weazles peeping out of a hole. The street, being a small back one, was quite deserted at that hour. After talking in low tones for a few seconds, and making sure, as Jeff said, that the coast was clear, the incendiaries shrunk round the corner and disappeared.

"Now, Jim," whispered the Bloater, "they've gone to No. 5; let's foller."

They were uncommonly active and sly little fellows, but, despite their utmost efforts, they failed to gain a position of vantage from which to observe the enemy without being seen. They did, indeed, manage to make out that the two men were for some time busily and stealthily engaged in the neighbourhood of Joe Dashwood's dwelling, but what they were doing could not be ascertained. After repeated and desperate efforts to overcome his difficulties, at the risk of his neck and to the detriment of his shins, the Bloater at last sat down on a doorstep within a dark passage, and feigned to tear his hair.

"Now ain't it wexin'?" he whispered, appealing to his small friend.

"Aggrawatin' beyond endourance," replied Jim, with looks of sympathy.

"Wot is to be done?" demanded the Bloater.

"Invite a Bobby to come an' help us," suggested Jim.

"H'm! an' stop 'em in their game, p'raps, at a pint w're nobody could prove nothink against 'em, besides bringin' on ourselves the purlite inquiry, 'Wot are *you* up to 'ere P'?"

Little Jim looked disconsolate and said nothing, which, as the Bloater testily remarked, was another of his witty rejoinders.

"Well, then," said Jim, "we must just wait till the fire breaks out an' then bust upon 'em all of a 'eap."

"H'm! much they'd care for *your* bustin' on 'em. No, Jim, we must risk a little. Never wenter, never win, you know. Just you go round by the other end of the street and creep as close as you can; you're small, you know, an' won't be so easy seen as me. Try to make out wot they're up to and then——"

"Then wot P?"

"W'y come back an' let me know. Away!" said the Bloater, waving his hand with the air of a field-marshal.

Jim disappeared at once and was absent about ten minutes, during which Master Robert Herring sat in the dark passage biting his nails and feeling really uncomfortable, as is usually the case with energetic

spirits when reduced to unavoidable inaction. Presently little Jim returned with, as his friend and patron remarked, his eyes like two saucers, and his face as white as a sheet.

"Hallo, Jim, wot's up?"

"Oh, Bob!" gasped Jim.

"Speak!" exclaimed the Bloater, seizing him by the shoulders and shaking him violently.

"They've got the 'ouse choke full o' combustibles," gasped Jim in an excited whisper. "I see 'em stuffin' straw and pitch, an' I dun know wot all, through a small back winder."

"So—*now's* the time for a Bobby," observed the Bloater, leaping up.

"No, taint," said Jim, detaining him. "I 'eard 'em speak. Oh, they're sly dogs! They ain't a-goin' to run away arter settin' it alight. They're goin' to run to the station, rouse up the men, an' help to put it out! an' one of 'em says, 'Jeff,' says 'e, larfin', 'won't we lend 'em a good 'and to put it hout neither!' And the other grinned, an' says, 'Yes, Phil, we'll do our best, an' it'll go hard if I can't in the middle o' the smoke an' flames, git a chance at Joe to ——' 'e didn't say no more, but 'e drewed 'is finger across 'is throat; but the one as 'e called Phil said, 'No, Jeff, no, I'll split on you if you do. It's quite enough to

give 'im a rap over the 'ead!' I didn't wait to 'ear no more arter that."

"They're safe not to go off, then," observed the Bloater; "nevertheless, we must take a Bobby into our confidence now, for the case begins to look ugly."

While these things were transpiring in the dark and silent night outside of "No. 5," the inmates of that modest mansion were buried in profound repose. Joe Dashwood, on leaving the station for the night and going home, had found that Molly had already retired, and was asleep in the inner room with the Rosebud in her bosom.

After contemplating this pleasant sight for a few minutes he returned to the outer or kitchen-drawing-room, where he found a cot extemporised out of four chairs and a baking board, on which reposed the sturdy little figure of Fred Crashington. That enthusiastic amateur fireman had been invited to take up his quarters at No. 5, until his father should be out of danger, and having devoted his energies during the entire day, along with the Rosebud, in a futile effort to extinguish that obstinate fire in the cupboard, had at length been persuaded to retire exhausted to the baking-board, where he lay with a happy smile on his parted lips, and his right arm embracing the quaint

old helmet, with which he was wont to extinguish his little head.

Being unusually tired that night, but not sleepy, Joe resolved to solace himself with a pipe before lying down. He threw off his coat, vest, and braces, pulled up his flannel shirt, so as to let it hang comfortably loose over the waistband of his trousers, sat down in an armchair in front of the fire, filled his pipe, and began to smoke. His intention was to "take a few whiffs and then turn in," but the influence of the tobacco appeared to be soporific, for he soon began to nod; then he removed his pipe, stared earnestly at the fire, and established quite a nodding acquaintance with it. Presently he dropped his chin on his broad chest and snored steadily.

From this condition of repose he was awakened by a sensation as if of suffocation by smoke. This was such an extremely natural, not to say habitual, state of things with Joe, that he was at least a couple of seconds in realizing the fact that there was unusual cause for haste and vigorous action. Like a giant refreshed Joe leaped to his work. Every fibre of his huge frame was replete with energy, and his heart beat strong, but it beat steadily; not a vestige of a flutter was there, for his head was clear and cool. He knew exactly what to do. He knew exactly what was

being done. Surprise did, indeed, fill him when he reflected that it was his own house which had caught fire, but that did not for a moment confuse him as to the certainty that the engine must be already out, and his comrades rushing to his assistance.

He strode to the door and opened it. A volume of dense black smoke, followed by sheets of flame drove him back. At the same moment loud shouts were heard outside, and a shriek came from the inner room. Joe dashed towards it. In passing, he pulled Fred off the baking board, and at the same moment seized the curious old helmet and almost instinctively clapped it on his own head. There was a back door to the house. Joe grasped his wife, and the Rosebud, and the bed-clothes in one mighty embrace, and bore the whole bundle towards this back door. Before he reached it it was dashed open by Bob Clazie, who sprang in with the "branch." Bob, having been roused to a fire so near at hand, had not taken time to go through the usual process of putting on his uniform. He, like Joe, was in dishabille.

"Here, take care of 'em. Let go the branch; I'll look after it. Foul play here. Let the police look out."

Joe said this sharply as he thrust the bundle containing his wife into Bob's arms, and, picking up the

Rosebud, who had slipped out, clapped her on Bob's back. Bob made for the back staircase, while Joe picked up the branch, and turning his head in the direction of the open door, shouted in the voice of a stentor, "Down with 'er!" Meanwhile, Fred, who had a vague impression that the fire in the cupboard had got to a powerful head at last, picked up the hose and looked on with a sleepy smile.

Obedient to the order, the water rushed on, filled and straightened the hose, threw Fred on his back on the floor, and caused the nozzle to quiver as Joe directed it to the fire.

Just then a man dashed into the room.

"Lend a hand here," cried Joe glancing round.

He saw in a moment by the man's look that he meant mischief. Instantly he turned the nozzle full in his face. Jeff, for it was he, fell as if he had been shot, and was partly washed, partly rolled down the back staircase, at the foot of which a policeman was prepared to receive him, but Jeff sprang up, knocked down the policeman, and fled. Seeing this, Mr. Sparks took alarm, and was about to follow when the Bloater suddenly sprang at his throat and little Jim caught him by the legs. He quickly disengaged himself, however, and ran off at full speed, closely followed by his young tormentors and two policemen, besides a

miscellaneous crowd of hooting and yelling lads and boys.

It was an exciting chase that ensued. The two policemen were young and strong, and for some time kept pretty near the fugitive, but gradually they fell behind, and, by doubling through several narrow streets, Sparks threw them off the scent. As for the crowd, the greater part of those who composed it gave in after a short run. But the Bloater and little Jim were not thus to be got rid of. They were fleet of foot and easily kept Mr. Sparks in view, though he made desperate efforts to catch them, as well as to get away from them. The two boys were so persevering that they followed him all the way to Thames Street, and, just when the unhappy man thought he had at length eluded them, they set up the cry of "Stop thief!" and gave chase again with a new force of policemen and roughs at their heels.

Turning abruptly into a dark passage, Sparks rushed upstairs, burst open a door and fell exhausted on the floor of the cheerless room occupied by poor Martha Reading. Almost at the same moment the two boys, who were at least a hundred yards in advance of the other pursuers, sprang into the room.

"Ha! run you down at last, have we?" gasped the Bloater.

Poor startled Martha, leaping at once to the conclusion that he was pursued, fell on her knees, and, in a voice of agonizing entreaty, begged the boys to have mercy on him!

"Eh! hallo! what?" exclaimed the Bloater, taken by surprise. Then, under a sudden impulse, he dashed out of the room followed by little Jim, and rushed into the street just as the first of the crowd came up.

"This way! Straight on! hooray!" he shouted, leading off the crowd in the direction of the river. The crowd followed. The Bloater led them into a maze of intricate back streets; shot far ahead of them, and then, doubling, like a hare, into a retired corner, stood chuckling there while the shouting crowd swept by.

For a few minutes, little Jim was utterly bereft of speech, owing to a compound of amazement, delight, excitement and exhaustion. After a little time he said—

"Well, this ~~is~~ a lark! But, I say, Bloater, d'ye think it was right to let 'im off like that?"

"Who's let 'im off, stoopid?" retorted the Bloater. "Don't I know 'is name—at least part of it; an' the 'abitation of 'is wife, or sweet'eart, or sister, or suthin' o' that sort?"

"Oh, ah, werry true," replied little Jim, with a terminating "sk!"

"Well, that bein' 'ow it is, we han't let 'im off just yet, d'ye see? So, now we'll go an' turn in."

With that observation the Bloater and little Jim went away to search for and appropriate some convenient place of repose for the night.

CHAPTER VII.

SEATED by the fire-side of Joe Dashwood's new abode—for the old one, although not quite "burnt out," was uninhabitable—Bob Clazie chatted and smoked his pipe contentedly. At the conclusion of a remark, he looked up in Mrs. Dashwood's puzzled face, and said, "That's 'ow it is, d'ye see?"

"No, I don't see," replied Mary, with a smile.

"No? well, now, that is koorious. W'y, it's as plain as the nose on my face. See here. As the law now stands, there is no public authority to inwestigate the cause o' fires in London; well, wot's the consikence, w'y, that there are regular gangs of scoundrels who make it their business to arrange fires for their own advantage."

"Now, that's just what I don't understand," said Mary, knitting her pretty brows; "what advantage *can* it be to any one to set fire to a house, except to pick-pockets who may get a chance of doing business in the crowd?"

"Well, that of itself is enough to endooce some blackguards to raise a fire, and likewise to get the shillin' for bringin' the first noose to the station; which, by the way, was the chief okipation of that willain Phil Sparks, I'm pretty sure. But here's 'ow it is. The swindlers I speak of, go an' take 'ouses—the further from fire-stations the better. Then they furnishes the 'ouses, arter which they insures 'em. In the course of a short time they removes most of the furniture in a quiet way, and then set the 'ouses alight, themselves escapin', p'rhaps, in nothin' but their night clothes. So, you see, they gits the insurance, which more than pays for all the furniture they had bought, besides which they 'ave a good deal of the furniture itself to sell or do wot they please with. That's one way in which fires are raised,—ain't it Joe?"

Joe, who sat smoking in silence on the other side of the fire, nodded, and, turning his head round, advised Fred Crashington and little May to make "less row."

"But we can't put it out widout a row!" remonstrated the Rosebud.

"What! have you found a fire in *this* cupboard, as well as in the one o' the old house?" asked Joe, with a laugh.

"Iss, iss; an' it's a far wuss fire than the last one!"

"That's your sort!" cried Fred; --now then, May, don't stand jawin' there, but down with number two. Look alive!"

"Ha! chips o' the old blocks, I see," said Bob Clazie, with a grin. "Well, as I was sayin', there's another class o' men, not so bad as the first, but bad enough, who are indooiced to go in for this crime of fire-raisin'—arson they calls it, but why so is beyond me to diskiver. A needy tradesman, for instance, when at his wits'-end for money, can't help thinkin' that a lucky spark would put him all right."

"But how could the burning of his goods put him all right?" demanded Mary.

"W'y, 'e don't want goods, you know, 'e wants to sell 'is goods an' so git *money*; but nobody will buy, so 'e can't sell, nor git money, yet money must be 'ad, for creditors won't wait. Wot then? All the goods are insured against fire. Well, make a bonfire of 'em, redoose 'em all to hashes, an' of coorse the insurance companies is bound to pay up, so 'e gits rid of the goods, gits a lot o' ready money in 'and, pays off 'is creditors, and p'rhaps starts fresh in a noo business! Now, a public officer to investigate such matters would mend things to some extent, though 'e mightn't exactly cure 'em. Some time ago the Yankees, I'm told, appointed a officer they called a fire-

marshal in some of their cities, and it's said that the consikence was a sudden an' extraor'nary increase in the convictions for arson, followed by a remarkable decrease in the number o' fires! They've got some-thin' o' the sam^o sort in France, an' over all the chief towns o' Europe, I b'lieve, but we don't need no such precautions in London. We're rich, you know, an' can afford to let scamps burn right an' left. It ain't worth our while to try to redooce the number of *our* fires. We've already got an average of about five fires every twenty-four hours in London. Why should we try to make 'em less, w'en they furnishes 'ealthy work to such fine fellows as Joe and me and the police—not to mention the fun afforded to crossin'-sweepers and other little boys, whose chief enjoyment in life would be gone if there was no fires."

"If *I* had the making of the laws," exclaimed Mary, flushing with indignation as she thought of her own recent risks and losses in consequence of fire-raising, "I'd have every man that set light to his house *hanged*!"

"Ah; an' if 'e could also be draw'd and quartered," added Bob, "and 'ave the bits stuck on the weather-cocks of St. Paul's, or atop of Temple Bar, it would serve 'im right."

"We must have you into Parliament some day,

Molly," said Joe, with a smile. "Women are tryin' hard, I believe, to get the right to vote for members; w'y not go the whole hog and vote themselves in?"

"They'd make splendid firemen too," said Clazie, "at least if they were only half as vigorous as your little May. By the way, Joe," continued Bob, "has Sparks been took yet?"

"Not yet. It is rumoured that the crossin'-sweeper who chased him down so smartly, suddenly favoured his escape at last, from some unaccountable cause or other. I suppose that Sparks bribed him."

"You're sure it was Sparks, are you?" inquired Bob.

"Quite sure. It is true I only saw his confederate, but one of the men who had often seen Sparks in company with Crashington, his brother-in-law, knew him at once and saw him run off, with the boys after him. He's a bad lot, but I hope he'll escape for poor Mrs. Crashington's sake."

"And I hope he won't escape, for poor Martha Reading's sake!" said Mary with much decision of tone.

"That's his sweet'art—a friend of Molly's!" said Joe to Bob in explanation.

At this point in the conversation, Master Fred Crashington, in his frantic efforts to reach an elevated

part of the cupboard, fell backwards, drawing a shelf and all its contents on the top of himself and May. Neither of them was hurt, though both were much frightened.

"I think *that* must have put the fire out at last," said Joe, with a laugh, as he took the panting rosebud on his knee and smoothed her soft little head. "We'll sit quiet now and have a chat."

A knock at the outer door here called Mrs. Dashwood from the room.

"Fire!" exclaimed May, holding up her finger and listening with eager expectation.

"No, little woman," said Joe, "they would ring out if it was fire."

Meanwhile Mrs. Dashwood opened the door and found herself confronted by a boy, with his hands in his pockets and his cap thrown in a reckless way half on the side and half on the back of his head.

"Oh, I suppose you are the boy Herring, sent here by Miss Reading," said Mrs. Dashwood.

"Well, as to that, ma'am, you must be guided by taste. I've 'eard of men of my years an' standin' bein' styled 'obblede'oys. My name, likewise, is open to question. Some of my friends calls me 'Erring—others of 'em, Raw 'Erring—others, again, the Bloater. But I'm in no wise partikler, I *did* come

from Miss Reading to 'ave an interview with Mrs. Dashwood—whom—I presoom——”

Here the Bloater laid his hand on his heart and made a courtly bow.

Mrs. Dashwood laughed, and said, “come in, boy.”

“I have a pal, ma'am—a chum—a—in fact a friend—may I——”

Without finishing his sentence or waiting for a reply, the Bloater gave a sharp whistle, and Little Jim stood by his side as if by magical influence, looking the embodiment of united innocence and impudence.

“Come in, both of you, and make haste,” said Mary, ushering them into a small empty room. “Now, boy——”

“Bloater, ma'am, if you 'ave no objection.”

“Well, Bloater, our communication with each other must be brief and to the point, because——”

“Yes, ma'am—sharp and short,” interrupted the Bloater—“reasons not required.”

Smiling in spite of herself, Mrs. Dashwood said—

“You know Mr. Sparks, and can—can—in short, give him into the hands of justice.”

“If I knowed w'ere justice was,” said the Bloater, sternly, “p'raps I might give Mr. Sparks into 'is 'ands, but I don't. It's my opinion that *justice* ain't finished

yet. They've made 'is 'ands no doubt—and pretty strong ones they are too—but they 'ave'nt give 'im brains yet. 'Ows'ever, to make a long story short, 'as 'Amlet said to 'is father's ghost, w'ich was prince of Timbuctoo, I *do* know Mr. Sparks, and I *can* give 'im into the 'ands of the p'lice—wot then ? ”

“ *Do it !* ” said Mrs. Dashwood, with sudden intensity of feeling and manner, “ Do it, boy— (“ Bloater,” murmured the lad) do it, Bloater. Oh ! you have no idea what a blessing it would be to—to—to—a poor, dear girl who is mad—infatuated and, and—then, he is *such* a scoundrel ; such a fire-raiser, deceiver, villain——”

“ You don't appear to like 'im yourself,” remarked the Bloater.

He said this so quietly and with an air of calmness which contrasted so strongly with Mrs. Dashwood's excitement, that little Jim gave vent to an irresistible “ sk ” and blew his nose violently to distract attention from it.

“ Will you not consent to give up a thorough scoundrel, who every one condemns ? ” demanded Mrs. Dashwood, with sudden indignation.

“ Well, that depends——”

“ Bloater,” said Mary, with increasing earnestness, “ I cannot bribe you—I have not the means even if I

had the will; but I would not if I could. I scorn bribery. If you will not aid me for the sake of a poor, helpless, infatuated girl, who is on the brink of ruin——”

“Missis Dashwood,” said the Bloater, with a look of serio-comic dignity, “I scorns bribery as much as you does. ‘No bribery, no o’rupt’ons, no Popery,’ them’s my mottoes—besides a few more that there’s no occasion to mention. W’ether or not I gives ’im up depends on circumstances. Now, I s’pose *you* want’s ’im took an’ bagged, ’cause ’e ain’t fit for your friend Martha Reading—we’ll drop the “Miss” if you please. Well, wot I want to know is, does Martha think as you does?”

“Of course not, boy. No doubt she knows that he is an unworthy scoundrel, but she can’t prevail on herself to forsake him; so, you see, I want to help her a little.”

“Ah, I see—yes—I see. Well, missis, I’ll take it into consideration. Come along, Jim.”

Without waiting for a reply, the Bloater quitted the house abruptly, followed by his friend. He walked very fast towards the City—so fast that Jim was compelled to trot—and was unusually silent. He went straight to the abode of Martha Reading, and found her sewing and weeping.

"Ha! he's bin with you, I see," said the Bloater.
"Did 'e ask you to let 'im 'ide 'ere?"

"Ye—es;" said Martha, hesitating; "but I refused to do it. God knows how willing—*how* willing—I would be to shelter and save him if I could!"

"Would you shelter a *guilty man*?" demanded the Bloater, sternly.

"I don't know that he *is* guilty," said Martha, evasively. "But, tell me, what did Mrs. Dashwood want with you?"

"That's a private matter," said the Bloater, frowning. "You can't turn me off the scent like that. I ask you, ain't it right to 'and a guilty man over to justice?"

"It is," replied Martha, wiping her eyes, "but it is also right to temper justice with mercy."

"I say, that's drawin' it rather fine, ain't it?" said the Bloater, screwing up one eyebrow and turning towards Little Jim; but that small youth was so touched with the poor girl's sorrow and so attracted by her countenance, that he had quite forgotten his patron for the moment. Going towards her, he laid his dirty little hand on her knee, and looked up in her face.

"God bless you, dear boy," she said, patting him

on the head, "you are the first that has given me a look of sympathy for many——"

She broke down suddenly, burst into a flood of tears, and, seizing the child in her arms, absolutely hugged him!

"Hallo! hallo!" cried the Bloater, when little Jim was released. "I say, you know, come, this sort o' thing will never do. W'y, its houtrageous. Come along with you."

Saying which he seized Little Jim by the collar, dragged him out into the street, and hurried him along. Presently he released him, but without slackening his pace, and said, "Now, Jim, you an' I shall go and pay *another* wisit."

They traversed several small streets, which seemed to be influenced by a tendency to gravitate towards the Thames; while the river, as if in sympathy, appeared to meet them more than half way in the shape of mud. As they proceeded, huge warehouses frowned above, having doors high up on their blank faces where windows ought to have been, with no steps leading thereto, but in some cases with huge block-tackles pendent therefrom, suggestive of the idea that the owners were wont to drop the enormous hooks and fish for passers-by. These streets naturally became more nautical in some respects as they neared

the river. Old bits of timber lay here and there among old cordage in little yards, where the owners appeared to deal in small-coal and miscellaneous filth. Elsewhere, worn-out anchors held tenaciously to the mud, as if afraid of being again pressed into service and carried off to sea. Everything was cold, dismal, dreary, disreputable; and here in the dirtiest corner of the smallest possible yard, the Bloater found a half-concealed door that might have been the portal to a dog-kennel or pig-sty. Opening it he entered, and Little Jim followed.

The aspect of things inside was not attractive. Dirt, damp, and rubbish prevailed in the room, which was just big enough to permit of a tall man lying down, but not high enough to admit of his standing up. An uncommonly small four-post bed almost filled the apartment, at the foot of which, on the floor and half-reclining against one of the posts, lay Phil Sparks, either dead-drunk or asleep, or both.

The Bloater glanced back at Little Jim with a look of satisfaction, and held up his finger to enjoin silence. Peering round the room, which was lighted by a farthing candle stuck in the neck of a pint bottle, he observed a piece of rope lying among some rubbish.

"Ha! this'll do," he whispered, as he took it up, and, with wonderful rapidity, made a loop on it.

"Now, Jim, you be ready to cut and run if he should waken before I 'ave 'im fast. Don't mind me; I'll look arter myself. An' wotever you do, *don't holler for the bobbies*. Mind that, else I'll strangle you."

With this advice and caution, the Bloater advanced towards the recumbent man, and passed the rope softly round his body, including his arms and the bed-post in the coil. Drawing it suddenly tight, he hastily made it fast; but there was no occasion for haste, for the sleep of the man was so profound that the action did not awake him.

"Hall right—fus' rate," said the Bloater aloud, as he wound the rope round and round Sparks, so as to make him doubly secure. "Nothin' could be better. Now, Jim, I'm goin' for to preach a sermon to-night—a sort o' discoorse. You never heard me preach, did you?"

Little Jim, who, despite his love of mischief, was somewhat alarmed at the strange proceedings of his friend and patron, looked at him with a mingled expression of fear and glee, and shook his head.

"Well, you shall 'ear. Moreover, I 'ope that you'll profit by wot you 'ears."

Saying this, he advanced his hand towards the sleeping man's face, and, causing his thumb to act as

a trigger to his middle finger, gave him such a flip on the point of his nose, that he awoke with a tremendous roar. Suddenly he became pale as death—supposing, no doubt, that he had betrayed himself—and glanced towards the door with a bewildered stare.

“Oh, you needn’t alarm yourself,” said the Bloater, placing a stool in front of his victim, and sitting down thereon, with a hand on each knee, “it ain’t the bobbies. If you keep quiet, there’s no fear of *them* in this neighbourhood. I can call ’em w’en I wants ’em. There’s nobody but me and little Jim ’ere—your friends, you know,”

Becoming suddenly convinced of the truth of this, Phil Sparks, who was very drunk, made so desperate an effort to free himself that he nearly overturned the bed.

“Oh, you are anxious to see the bobbies, are you? Well, go an’ call ’em in, Jim.”

Jim rose to obey, and the man became instantly quiet.

“Ho! you’re reasonable *now*, are you? That’s well. You need’nt call ’em in yet, Jim. We’ll grant ’im a reprieve. Fetch that stool, an’ sit down beside me—there. Now, Mr. Sparks, *alias* Blazes, no doubt *you’re* a precious specimen of hinnocent ’unmanity, ain’t you?”

Sparks made no reply, but scowled at the boy with a look of deadly hatred.

"Well, upon my word," resumed the Bloater, with a smile, "if I kep' a menagerie, I'd offer you five 'undred a year to represent a Tasmanian devil. But look 'ere, now, I've no time to waste with you; I come 'ere to give you a bit of my mind. You're a fire-raiser, you are. Ah! you may well wince an' grow w'ite. You'd grow w'iter still, with a rope round your neck, if you wos left to *my* tender mercies, you w'ite livered villain! for I knows you; I've watched you; I've found you hout; an' I've only got to 'old up my little finger to cut your pretty little career prematurely short. You don't seem to like that? No, I didn't expect you would. This young man, whose 'art is big, if 'is body's small, knows as much about you as I do. Two witnesses, you see; but you *ain't* left to *our* tender mercies; and if you wants to know who delivered you from us, and from the magistrates, and Jack Ketch, *alias* Calcraft, I replies, *Martha Reading*. Ha! you look surprised. Quite nat'ral. You've deserved very different treatment from that young 'ooman, an' didn't expect that she'd return good for evil, I s'pose. That's because you don't know 'er; you don't understand 'er, you miserable lump of selfish stoopidity. 'Ows'ever, as I said

before, I ain't a-goin' to waste no more time with you. But let me, before biddin' you adoo, give you a caution. Remember, that *I've got my eye on you*. Just one word more. W'en you thinks of *me*, don't think of one as 'as got any tender mercies, for I ain't got none; not a scrap of 'em, nor nothin' of the sort. W'en you wants to know the true cause of your bein' 'let off, just think of two words—*Martha Reading!* She knows nothin' o' wot I'm doin', nevertheless, *she's* done it! Let 'er name ring in your ears, an' thunder in your brain, and burn in your 'art, till it consooms your witals or your willany! Now, Jim," concluded the Bloater, rising and opening a large clasp-knife, "you go to the door, open it wide, an' stan' by to cut, and run. This gen'lm'n ain't to be trusted w'en free. Are you ready?"

"Hall ready," replied Jim.

The Bloater cut the cord that bound Phil Sparks, and darted from the room. Before the man could disentangle himself from its coils, the boys were safe from pursuit, quietly wending their way through the crowded thoroughfares of the great city.

CHAPTER VIII.

SEVERAL months passed away. During this period Phil Sparks kept in close hiding, because, although the Bloater, true to his promise, refrained from giving information against him, there were others who knew and suspected him, and who had no visions of an imploring Martha to restrain them in their efforts to deliver him into the hands of justice.

During this period, also, Ned Crashington recovered his wonted health and vigour, while his wife, to some extent, recovered her senses, and, instead of acting as an irritant blister on her husband, began really to aim at unanimity. The result was, that Ned's love for her, which had only been smothered a little, burst forth with renewed energy, and Maggie found that in peace there is prosperity. It is not to be supposed that Maggie was cured all at once. She was not an angel—only an energetic and self-willed woman. She therefore broke out now and then in her old style; but, on the whole, she was much improved, and the

stalwart fireman no longer sought martyrdom in the flames.

During this period, too, the men of the Red Brigade held on the even tenor of their furious fiery way; not, indeed, scatheless, but with a much smaller amount of damage to life and limb than might have been expected in a service where the numerical strength was so low—only about 380 men—and where the duty, night and day, was so severe and hazardous.

About this time, their Chief's "Report" for the past year was issued, and it revealed a few facts which are worthy of record. It stated that there had been altogether 1946 fires in London during the past twelve months; that is, an average of a little more than five fires every twenty-four hours. Of these 1670 had been slight, while 276 were serious. In these fires 186 persons had been seriously endangered, of whom 153 were rescued by the men of the Red Brigade, while 33 perished, despite the most gallant efforts to save them. The Report showed, further, that there were in London at that time (and it is much the same still) 50 fire-engine stations, 25 land steam fire-engines, 85 manual fire-engines, 2 floating steam fire-engines on the Thames, and 104 fire-escapes. The number of journeys made by the fire-

engines during the year was 8127, and the total distance run was 21,914 miles. This, the reader will observe, implies an enormous amount of labour performed by the 380 heroes who constitute the Red Brigade, and who, although thus heavily overtaxed, were never heard to murmur or complain. That they suffered pretty frequently and severely might have been expected. In truth, it is a marvel that they did not suffer more. The Report showed that, among them all in the course of the year, they had received 36 contusions, dislocations, fractures, and such like injuries; 22 incised, lacerated, and punctured wounds; 18 injuries to eyes, head, and arms; 2 internal injuries; 22 sprains, and, strange to say, only 4 burns and scalds, making 104 injuries altogether, but no deaths.

Things being in this condition, the brigade lay on its oars, so to speak, awaiting "a call," one bleak evening in November, when everything in London looked so wet, and cold, and wretched, that some people went the length of saying that a good rousing fire would be quite a cheering sight for the eyes to rest upon.

In the West End station, to which we have directed attention more than once in this tale, Joe Dashwood, and Ned Crashington, and Bob Clazie, with his

brother David, and some more of the men, were seated in the inner lobby, discussing the news of the day, and settling the affairs of the nation to their own entire satisfaction. The Bloater and little Jim were also there, hanging about the door. These fire-eating youths had become so fond of the locality and of the men, that they had taken to sweeping a crossing in the neighbourhood, and were wont to cheer their spirits, during intervals of labour, by listening to, or chaffing, the firemen, and following them, when possible, to fires.

Suddenly the rattle of the telegraphic bell roused the men. This was so common an occurrence, that it scarcely called forth a passing remark. One of them, however, rose with alacrity, and, replying to the signal, read off the message. We cannot give the precise words of the telegram, but it was to the effect that a fire had broken out at St. Katharine's Docks, and that all available force was to be sent out at once.

On hearing this there was unusual promptitude in the movements of the firemen. At all times they are bound, on pain of a heavy fine, to turn out in three minutes after receiving the call to a fire. Sometimes they succeed in turning out in less. It was so on the present occasion. Mention of a fire anywhere near the docks has much the same effect on the Red

Brigade as the order to march to the field of Waterloo had on the British army. The extreme danger; the inflammable nature of the goods contained in the huge and densely-packed warehouses; the proximity to the shipping; the probability of a pitched battle with the flames; the awful loss of property, and perhaps of life, if the fire should gain the mastery, and the urgent need there is for hurrying all the disposable force in London to the spot without delay, if the victory is to be gained—all these circumstances and considerations act as an unusually sharp spur to men, who, however, being already willing at all times to do their utmost, can only force themselves to gain a few additional moments of time by their most strenuous exertions.

In less than three minutes, then, our West End engine sprang off, like a rocket, at full gallop, with a crack of the whip, a snort from the steeds, a shout from the men to clear the way, and a cheer from the bystanders.

Two of these bystanders started off alongside of the engine, with glittering eyes and flushed cheeks. The Bloater and Little Jim had heard the telegraph read off, had caught the words, "Fire—St. Katharine's Docks," and knew well what that implied. They resolved to witness the fight, and ran as if their lives depended on the race. It need scarcely be said that

the engine quickly left them out of sight behind, not only because the horses were fleet, but also because various pedestrians, into whose bosoms the boys plunged in their blind haste, treated them rather roughly, and retarded their progress a good deal. But nothing short of a knock-down blow could have put a full stop to the career of those imps of the broom. After innumerable hair-breadth escapes from "bobbies" and others, by agile bounds and desperate plunges among horses' legs and carriage-wheels, they reached the scene of action not *very* long after the engine with which they had set out.

It was night. The fire had been raging for some time with terrible fury, and had already got full possession of two large warehouses, each five or six floors in height, all connected by means of double iron folding-doors, and stored from basement to roof with spirits, tallow, palm-oil, cotton, flax, jute, and other merchandise, to the extent of upwards of two millions sterling in value. The dock fire-engines had been brought to bear on the flames a few minutes after the fire was discovered. The two floating-engines were paddled at once to the spot, and their powerful hydrants poured continuous streams on the flames; while, every few minutes, another and another of the land-engines came rattling up, until all the available

force of the Red Brigade was on the spot, each man straining, like the hero of a forlorn hope, regardless of life and limb, to conquer the terrible foe. The Brompton and Chelsea volunteer fire-brigade, and several private engines, also came up to lend a helping hand. But all these engines, brave hearts, and vigorous proceedings, appeared at first of no avail, for the greedy flames shot out their tongues, hissed through water and steam, and licked up the rich fuel with a deep continuous roar, as if they gloated over their unusually splendid banquet, and meant to enjoy it to the full, despite man's utmost efforts to oppose them.

The excitement at this time was tremendous. Every available spot of ground or building from which the most limited view of the fire could be obtained was crowded to excess by human beings, whose upturned faces were lighted more or less ruddily according to their distance from the fire.

No doubt the greater proportion of the vast multitude beheld the waste of so much property with anxiety and regret. Doubtless, also, many thoughtless ones were there who merely enjoyed the excitement, and looked upon it as a pyrotechnic display of unwonted splendour. But there was yet another class of men, aye, and women, whose view of the matter was fitted to cause anxiety in the breasts of those who

talk of "elevating the masses," and this was by far the largest class. The greater part of them belonged to the lowest class of labourers, men willing to work for their living, but who got little to do. Amongst these not one expression of regret was to be heard, though the women sometimes asked anxiously whether any one was likely to be hurt. But let a few of these speak for themselves.

"Ah," said an old woman, with an unintellectual style of countenance, "now there will be plenty of work for poor men."

"Yes," responded a rough, with a black eye, "that's true. 'My blissin,' as Paddy says, on a fire; it warms the cockles o' yer heart an' kapes yer hands busy."

"They've much need to be kep' busy, sure enough," remarked another man, "for mine have been pretty idle for more than a week."

"I wish," exclaimed another, with a bitter curse on mankind in general, "that the whole Thames would go a-fire, from Westminster to Gravesend."

The energy with which this was said caused a general laugh and a good deal of chaff, but there was no humour in the man who spoke. He was one of those of whom it is said by a periodical which ought to know, that hundreds of such may be seen day by day,

year by year, waiting at the different gates of the docks, in stolid weariness, for the chance of a day's work—the wage of which is half-a-crown. When a foreman comes to a gate to take on a few such hands, the press of men, and the faces, hungry and eager beyond description, make one of the saddest of the sad sights to be seen even at the east end of London.

In another part of the crowd, where the street was narrow, a scene of a most fearful kind was being enacted. All scoundrelism appeared to have collected in that spot. For two or three hours robbery and violence reigned unchecked in the very face of the police, who, reduced to inaction by the density of the crowd, could render little or no assistance to the sufferers. Scarcely one respectably dressed person was unmolested. Hats were indiscriminately smashed over the brows of their wearers, coats were torn off their backs, and watches and purses violently wrested from their owners. In many cases there was no attempt at secrecy, men were knocked down and plundered with all the coolness and deliberation with which we commonly pursue our lawful calling.

By degrees the perseverance and heroism of the firemen were rewarded. The fire began to succumb to the copious floods with which it was deluged, and, towards midnight, there was a perceptible diminution

in the violence of the flames. There were, however, several temporary outbursts from time to time, which called for the utmost watchfulness and promptitude on the part of the Brigade.

During one of these a block of private dwellings nearest to the conflagration was set on fire. So intent was every one on the *great* fire that this incidental one was not observed until it had gained considerable headway. The buildings were very old and dry, so that before an engine could be detached from the warehouses it was in a complete blaze. Most of the inhabitants escaped by the chief staircase before it became impassable, and one or two leaped from the lower windows.

It chanced that Joe Dashwood's engine was nearest to this house at the time, and was run up to it.

"Now then, lads, look alive," said Joe, as the men affixed the hose and suction-pipe.

"Out o' the way!" cried Ned Crashington to two boys who appeared to be rather curious about the operations of the firemen.

"I say," exclaimed the Bloater in great excitement, "why—that's the 'ouse w're *Martha* lives!"

"Who's *Martha*?" asked Ned, without interrupting his operation of screwing on an additional length of hose.

"W'y, the friend o' Joe Dashwood's wife—Martha—Martha Reading, you know."

"Eh!" exclaimed Ned, looking up.

At that moment Martha herself appeared at a window in the upper story, waving her arms and shrieking wildly for help. Men were seen endeavouring to bring forward a fire-escape, but the crowd was so dense as to render this an unusually difficult and slow operation.

Without uttering a word, Ned Crashington dashed up the blazing staircase. For a moment he was lost to view, but quickly reappeared, attempting to cross a half-charred beam which overhung a yawning gulf of fire where the first and second floors had just fallen in. Suddenly a dense mass of smoke surrounded him. He staggered, threw up his arms, and was seen to fall headlong into the flames. A deep groan, or cry of horror, arose from the crowd, and wild shouts of "fetch a ladder," "bring up the escape," were heard, while poor Martha got out on the window-sill to avoid the flames, which were rapidly drawing towards and almost scorching her.

Just then a man was seen to dash furiously through the crowd, he fought his way madly—knocking down all who opposed him. Gaining the door of the burning house he sprang in.

"I say," whispered little Jim, in an excited voice, "it's Phil Sparks!"

"I'm glad to hear it," observed a quiet, broad-shouldered man, who stood near two policemen, to whom he winked knowingly.

The Bloater attempted to move off, but one of the policemen detained him. The other detained little Jim.

Meanwhile the crowd looked for Phil's reappearance on the beam from which poor Ned Crashington had fallen, but Phil knew the house better than Ned. He gained the upper floor by a back stair, which was not quite impassable; seized Martha in his arms, just as she was about to leap into the street, and dragged her back into the smoke and flames. It appeared almost certain that both must have perished; but in a few seconds the man was seen to descend the lower stair with the woman in his arms, and in another moment a wild enthusiastic cheer burst from the vast multitude as he leaped into the street.

Laying Martha gently down on a doorstep, Sparks bent over her, and whispered in her ear. She appeared to have swooned, but opened her eyes, and gazed earnestly in the face of her deliverer.

"The Lord must have sent you to save me, Phil; He will save *you* also, if you will trust Him."

"Forgive me, Martha, I was hard on you, but——"

"God bless you, Phil——"

"Clear the way there," cried a commanding voice ;
"here, doctor, this way."

The crowd opened. A medical man came forward and examined Martha, and pronounced her to be only slightly injured. Several men then raised her and carried her towards a neighbouring house. Phil Sparks was about to follow, but the quiet man with the broad shoulders touched him gently on the arm, and said that he was "wanted."

"Sorry to interrupt you in such a good work, but it can't be helped. Other people can take care of her now, you know; come along."

Sparks' first impulse was to knock the quiet man down and fly, but he felt a restraining power on his other arm, and, looking round, observed a tall policeman at his side. As if by magic, another tall policeman appeared in front of him, and a third behind him. He suddenly bent down his head and suffered himself to be led away. Seeing this, the Bloater and little Jim wrenched themselves from the grasp of their respective captors, dived between the legs of the bystanders, as eels might do among sedges, and vanished, to their own inexpressible delight and the total discomfiture of

the "bobbies." They met a few minutes later at a well-known rendezvous.

"I wish 'e 'adn't bin took," said the Bloater with a look of regret on his expressive though dirty countenance.

"Poor Martha!" said little Jim, almost crying as he thought of her. "'Ow much d' you think 'e'll get, Bloater?"

"Twenty years at least; p'r'aps go for life; you see it's an aggrawated case. I've bin makin' partikler inquiries, and I finds 'e's bin raisin' no end o' fires doorin' the last six months—kep' the Red Brigade trottin' about quite in a surprisin' way. I rather fear that 'e'll be let in for ever an' a day."

The Bloater was not quite correct in his guess. When the trial came on, to the surprise of all, especially of his "pals," Phil Sparks pleaded *guilty*! Partly in consideration of this, and partly on account of his last courageous act in saving the girl, he was let off with fifteen years penal servitude.

But, to return from this episode. The great fire at the docks, after gutting several warehouses, was finally subdued. And what of the loss? A hundred thousand pounds did not cover it, and every insurance office in London suffered! In addition to this, several persons lost their lives, while the Red Brigade, besides

having some of their number more or less severely injured, lost one of its best and bravest men.

Gallant Ned Crashington's fighting days were over. His mangled remains were gathered up next morning, and, a few days later, were conveyed by his comrades to their last resting-place.

It is no easy matter to move the heart of London. That vast nation-in-a-city has too many diverse interests to permit of the eyes of all being turned, even for a moment, upon one thing. Nevertheless the fireman's funeral seemed to cause the great cord to vibrate for a little. Hundreds of thousands of people turned out to witness the cortége. Ned's coffin was drawn, military fashion, on one of the engines peculiar to his profession, with his helmet and hatchet placed upon the lid. The whole of the force of the brigade that could be spared followed him in uniform, headed by their chief, and accompanied by a large detachment of the police force. The procession was imposing, and the notices that appeared next day in all the papers were a touching tribute of respect to the self-sacrificing fireman, who, as one of these papers said, "left a widow and son, in poor circumstances, to mourn his early death."

Ah, these things were soon forgotten in the rush of the world's business by all save that widow and son,

and one or two bosom friends. Even the men of the Red Brigade *appeared* to forget the fallen hero very soon. We say "appeared," because there were some among them who mourned Ned as a dear brother, chief among whom was Joe Dashwood. But whatever the feelings of the firemen might have been, theirs was a warfare that allowed no time for the undue indulgence or exhibition of grief. The regular "calls" and duties went on steadily, sternly, as if nothing had occurred, and before Ned's remains had lain a night in their last resting-place, many of his old comrades were out again doing fierce battle with the restless and untameable flames.

CHAPTER IX.

YEARS passed away, and with them many old things vanished, while many novelties appeared, but the Red Brigade remained much as it was, excepting that it was, if possible, smarter and more energetic than ever.

In the lobby of our West-end station one pleasant summer evening, the men sat and stood about the open door beside the trim engines and *matériel* of their profession, chatting heartily as men are wont to do when in high health and spirits. There were new faces among them, but there were also several that had long been familiar there. The stalwart form of Joe Dashwood was there, so little altered by time that there was nothing about him to tell that he was passing the period of middle-age, save a few gray hairs that mingled here and there with the dark curls on his temples. Bob Clazie was there also, but he had not stood the trials of his profession so well as Joe—probably his constitution was not so strong. A disagreeable short cough harassed him, though he

made light of it. Frequent scorching, smoking, and partial suffocation had increased his wrinkles and rendered his eyelids permanently red. Nevertheless, although nearly fifty years old, Bob Clazie was still one of the best men in the Brigade.

Joe Dashwood wore a pair of brass epaulettes on his shoulders, which indicated that he had attained to the highest rank in the service, short of the chief command.

He was giving directions to one of the younger men of the force, when a tall strapping young man, with a plain but open and singularly pleasing countenance entered, and going up to him shook him warmly by the hand.

"Well, Bob, what's the news? you seem excited this evening," said Joe.

"So I am, Joe; and with good reason too, for several pleasant things have happened to-day. In the first place, my friend and patron——"

"That's the old gentleman with the ruddy face and the bald head?" interrupted Joe.

"Yes, and with the kind heart. Don't ever omit the kind heart, Joe, in your description of him, else you'll only have painted half the portrait."

"Well, but the kind heart ain't quite so visible at first sight as the ruddy face and bald head, you know."

"Perhaps not; but if you watched him long enough to see him *act*, you'd perceive the kind heart as plain as if it hung at his button-hole, and beat like a sixty-horse-power steam-engine *outside* his ribs instead of inside," said the strapping young man with quite a glow of enthusiasm. "Oh, if you could only see how that old gentleman labours, and strives, and wears himself out, in his desire to rescue what they call our Street Arabs, you could'nt help loving him as I do. But I'm wandering from the pleasant things I've got to tell about. Through his influence my friend Jim has obtained a good appointment on the Metropolitan Railway, which gives him a much better salary than he had in Skrimp's office, and opens up a prospect of promotion; so, although it sends him underground before his natural time, he says he is quite content to be buried alive, especially as it makes the prospect of his union with a very small and exceedingly charming little girl with black eyes not quite so remote as it was. In the second place, you'll be glad to hear that the directors of the insurance office with which I am connected have raised my salary, influenced thereto by the same old gentleman with the ruddy face, bald head, and kind heart——"

"Coupled with your own merits, Bob," suggested Joe.

"I know nothing about *that*," replied the strapping young man with a smile, "but these pleasant pieces of good fortune have enabled me and Jim to carry out a plan which we have long cherished—to lodge together, with Martha Reading as our landlady. In truth, anticipating some such good fortune as has been sent to us, we had some time ago devoted part of our savings to the purpose of rescuing poor Martha from that miserable needlework which has been slowly killing her so long. We have taken and furnished a small house, Martha is already installed as the owner, and we go there to-night for the first time, as lodgers."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Joe, laughing; "why, Bob, you and your friend act with as much promptitude as if you had been regularly trained in the Fire Brigade."

We received much of our training *from* it, if not *in* it," returned the strapping young man with the plain but pleasant countenance. "Don't you remember, Joe, how perseveringly we followed you in former days when *I* was the Bloater and *he* was little Jim?"

"Remember it! I should think I do," replied Joe. "How glad my Mary will be when she hears what you have done."

"But that's not all my news," continued the Bloater (if we may presume to use the old name). "Last, but not least, Fred has asked me to be his groom's-man. He wrote me a very pathetic letter about it, but omitted to mention the day—not to be wondered at in the circumstances. Poor Fred, his letter reminded me of the blotted copies which I used to write with such trouble and sorrow at the training school to which my patron sent me."

"There's reason for the blotted letter besides the excitement of his approaching marriage," said Joe. "He hurt his hand the last fire he attended, and it's in a sling just now, so he must have taken it out, for temporary duty when he wrote to you. The truth is that Fred is too reckless for a fireman. He's scarcely cool enough. But I can inform you as to the day; it is Thursday next. See that you are up to time, Bob."

"No fear of me being late," replied the Bloater. "By the way, have you heard of that new method of putting out fires that somebody has invented?"

"I did hear of some nonsensical plan," replied Joe, with a slight expression of contempt, "but I don't think it worth while to pay attention to things o' this sort. There's nothin' can beat good cold water."

"I'm not so sure of that, Joe," replied his friend gravely. "I have been reading an account of it in

the *Insurance Guardian*, and it seems to me that there is something worth attending to in the new plan. It looks as if there was life in it, for a company is to be got up called the 'Fire and Water Company.'"

"But what is this new plan?" asked Joe, sending forth a violent puff from his pipe, as if to indicate that it would all end in smoke.

"Well, I'm not sure that I've got a correct notion of it myself, but my impression is that carbonic acid gas is the foundation-principle of it. Fire cannot exist in the presence of this gas—wherever it goes extinction of fire is instantaneous, which is more than you can say for water, Joe; for as you know well, fire, when strong enough, can turn that into steam as fast as you can pour it on, and after getting rid of it in this way, blaze up as furious as ever. What this company proposes to do is to saturate water with this carbonic acid gas mixed with nitrogen, and then pour that prepared water on fires. Of course, if much water were required, such a plan would never succeed, but a very small quantity is said to be sufficient. It seems that some testing experiments of a very satisfactory kind have been made recently—so you see, Joe, it is time to be looking out for a new profession!"

"H'm. I'll stick to the old brigade, at all events

till the new company beats us from the field. Perhaps when that happens they'll enrol some of us to work the—what d'ye call 'em?—soda-water engines. They'll have engines of course, I suppose?"

"Of course," replied the Bloater; "moreover, they mean to turn their prepared water to good account when there are no fires to put out. It is said that the proportions of the mixture can be so varied that, with one kind, the pump may be used for the clarification of beer, oils, treacle, quicksilver, and such like, and for the preservation of fruit, meat, milk, etc., and with another mixture they propose to ventilate mines, and tunnels; water gardens; kill insects on trees and flowers; soften water for domestic uses, and breweries, and manufacture soda-water, seltzer water, and other aerated beverages——"

"Oh, I say, Bob, hold on," cried Joe; "you seem to forget that my capacity for swallowing is limited."

"Well, perhaps you'll get it enlarged enough before long, to swallow all that and a deal more," said the Bloater, with a half serious air. "Meanwhile I'll continue to wish all success and prosperity to the Red Brigade—though you *do* cause a tremendous amount of damage by your floods of water, as we poor insurance companies know. Why, if it were

not for the heroes of the salvage corps we should be ruined altogether. It's my opinion, Joe, that the men of the salvage corps run quite as much risk as your fellows do in going through fire and smoke and working among falling beams and tumbling walls in order to cover goods with their tarpaulings and protect them from water."

"I admit that the salvage men do their work like heroes," said Joe; "but if you would read our chief's report for last year, you would see that we do our best to put out fires with the smallest possible amount of water. Why, we only used about eleven million gallons in the last twelve months—a most insignificant quantity that, for the amount of work done!"

A tinkle of the telegraph bell here cut short the conversation. "Fire, in the Mall, Kensington," was the signal.

"Get her out, lads!" cried Joe, referring to the engine.

Helmets and hatchets were donned and buckled on in the old style, and quiet jokes or humorous and free-and-easy remarks were uttered in slow, even sleepy tones, while the men acted with a degree of prompt celerity that could not have been excelled had their own lives depended on their speed. In

three minutes, as usual, they were off at full gallop. The Bloater—who still longed to follow them as of old, but had other business on hand—wished them “good luck,” and proceeded at a smart pace to his new lodgings.

We must change the scene now, for the men of the Red Brigade do not confine their attentions exclusively to such matters as drilling, fighting, suffering, conquering, and dying. They sometimes marry! Let us look in at this little church where, as a passer-by remarks, “*something* appears to be going on.”

A tall handsome young man leads to the altar a delicate, beautiful, blooming bride, whose bent head and blushing cheek, and modest mien and dependent air, contrast pleasantly with the gladsome, firm countenance, stalwart frame, and self-reliant aspect of the bridegroom.

Looking at them as they stood then, no one could have entertained for a moment the idea that these two had ever united in the desperate and strenuous attempt to put out a fire! Yet so it was. They had, once upon a time, devoted themselves to the extinction of a fire in a cupboard with such enthusiasm that they had been successful not only in putting that fire out, but in lighting another fire, which nothing short of union for life could extinguish!

Joe Dashwood gave away the bride, and he could not help remarking in a whisper to the Bloater (who was also there in sumptuous attire) that if ever a man was the born image of his father that man was Fred Crashington—an opinion which was heartily responded to by Mrs. Maggie Crashington, who, then in the period of life which is described as “fat, fair, and forty,” looked on at the proceedings with intense satisfaction. Mary Dashwood—also fat, fair, and forty—was there too, and if ever a woman congratulated herself on a rose-bud having grown into a full blown blush-rose, that woman was Mary.

Besides a pretty large company of well-dressed people, with white favours in their breasts, there was a sprinkling of active men with sailor-like caps, who hung about the outskirts of the crowd, and among these were two or three stout fellows with brass helmets and dirty hands and faces, and wet garments, who had returned from a recent fire just in time to take a look at their comrade and his fair bride.

“Poor Ned, how his kind heart would have rejoiced to see this day!” murmured Joe, brushing his cheek hastily as he retired from the altar.

So, the wedding party left the church, and the firemen returned to their posts of watchfulness and duty.

About the same period that this wedding took place, there was another wedding in the great metropolis to which we would draw the reader's attention. Not that it was a great one or a splendid one; on the contrary, if it was marked by any unusual peculiarities, these were shabbiness and poverty. The wedding party consisted of only two, besides the bride and bridegroom, and everything was conducted with such quietness, and gravity, and absence of excitement, that it might almost have been mistaken for a funeral on a small scale by any one unacquainted with the ceremonial appertaining thereto.

The happy pair, besides looking very sad, were past the meridian of life. Both were plainly dressed, and each appeared desirous of avoiding observation. The man, in particular, hung his head and moved awkwardly, as if begging forgiveness generally for presuming to appear in the character of a bridegroom. His countenance had evidently never been handsome, but there was a sad subdued look about it—the result, perhaps, of prolonged suffering—which prevented it from being repulsive. He looked somewhat like an invalid, yet his powerful frame and the action of his strong muscular hands were not in keeping with that idea.

The bride, although careworn and middle-aged,

possessed a singularly sweet and attractive countenance—all the more attractive that it wore a habitual expression of sadness. It was a sympathetic face, too, because it was the index to a loving, sympathetic, Christian soul, and its ever-varying indications of feeling, lightened and subdued and modified, but never quite removed, the sadness.

The two who composed the remainder of this wedding party were young men, apparently in a higher position of life than the principals. The one was tall and strapping, the other rather small, but remarkably active and handsome. It was evident that they were deeply interested in the ceremony in which they took part, and the smaller of the two appeared to enjoy some humorous reminiscences occasionally, to judge from the expression of his face when his glance chanced to meet that of his tall friend.

As they were leaving the altar, the bridegroom bent down and murmured in a deep soft voice—

"It's like a dream, Martha. It ain't easy to believe that such good luck should come to the likes o' me."

The bride whispered something in reply, which was inaudible to those who followed.

"Yes, Martha, yes," returned the bridegroom;

"no doubt it is as you put it. But after all, there's only one of His sayin's that has gone right home to me. I've got it by heart *now*—'I came not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance.' 'Twould have bin all up with me long ago but for that, Martha."

They reached the door at this point, got into a cab, and drove away. The remainder of the wedding party left the little church on foot.

The same evening on which this event took place, the strapping young man and the little active youth sat together at the open window of a comfortable though small parlour, enjoying a cup of tea. The view from the window was limited, but it possessed the charm of variety; commanding as it did, a vista of chimney-pots of every shape and form conceivable—many of which were capped with those multiform and hideous contrivances with which foolish man vainly endeavours to cure smoke.

"Well, Jim," asked the strapping youth, as he gazed pensively on this prospect, "what d'you think of it?"

"What do you refer to, Bob—our view or the wedding?"

"The wedding, of course."

"It's hard to say," replied Jim, musing. "He

seemed to be such an unmitigated scoundrel when we first made his acquaintance that it is difficult to believe he is a changed man now."

"By which you mean to insinuate, Jim, that the Gospel is not sufficient for out-and-out blackguards; that it is only powerful enough to deal with such modified scoundrels as you and I were."

"By no means," replied Jim, with a peculiar smile; "but, d'you know, Bloater, I never can feel that we were such desperate villains as you make us out to have been, when we swept the streets together."

"Just listen to him!" exclaimed the Bloater, smiting his knee with his fist, "you can't *feel*!—what have *feelings* to do with knowledge? Don't you *know* that we were fairly and almost hopelessly *in the current*, and that we should probably have been swept off the face of the earth by this time if it had not been for that old gentleman with the bald head and the kindly——"

"There, now, Bloater, don't let us have any more of that, you become positively rabid when you get upon that old gentleman, and you are conceited enough, also, to suppose that all the gratitude in the world has been shovelled into your own bosom. Come, let us return to the point, what do I think of the wedding—well, I think a good deal of it. There

is risk, no doubt, but there is that in everything sub-lunary. I think, moreover, that the marriage is founded on *true love*. He never would have come to his present condition but for true love to Martha, which, in God's providence, seems to have been made the means of opening his mind to Martha's *message*, the pith of which message was contained in his last remark on leaving the church. Then, as to Martha, our own knowledge of her would be sufficient to ease our minds as to her wisdom, even if it were not coupled with the reply she made to me when I expressed wonder that she should desire to marry such a man. 'Many waters,' she said, 'cannot quench love!'

"Ha! you know something of that yourself," remarked Bob with a smile.

"Something," replied little Jim, with a sigh.

"Well, don't despond," said the Bloater, laying his hand on Jim's shoulder. "I have reason to know that the obstacles in your way shall soon be removed, because that dear old gentleman with the——"

He was cut short by a loud, gruff shouting in the street below, accompanied by the rattling of wheels and the clatter of horses' hoofs.

"Ah, there they go!" cried Jim, his eyes with enthusiasm as he and his friend leaned out of the window, and strove to gain a glimpse of the street

between the forest of chimneys, "driving along, hammer and tongs, neck or nothing, always at it night and day. A blessing on them!"

"Amen," said the Bloater, as he and Jim resumed their seats and listened to the sound of the wheels, voices, and hoofs dying away in the distance.

Reader, we re-echo the sentiment, and close our tale with the remark that there are many rescued men and women in London who shall have cause, as long as life shall last, to pray for a blessing on the overwrought heroes who fill the ranks, and fight the battles of the Red Brigade

FORT DESOLATION;
OR,
SOLITUDE IN THE WILDERNESS.

FORT DESOLATION; OR, SOLITUDE IN THE WILDERNESS.

CHAPTER I.

THE OUTSKIRTER.

To some minds solitude is depressing, to others it is congenial. It was the former to our friend John Robinson; yet he had a large share of it in his chequered life. John—more familiarly known as Jack—was as romantic as his name was the reverse. To look at him you would have supposed that he was the most ordinary of common-place men, but if you had known him, as we did, you would have discovered that there was a deep, silent, but ever-flowing river of enthusiasm, energy, fervour—in a word, romance—in his soul, which seldom or never manifested itself in words, and only now and then, on rare occasions, flashed out in a lightning glance, or blazed up in a fiery countenance. For the most part

Jack was calm as a mill-pond, deep as the Atlantic, straightforward and grave as an undertaker's clerk and good-humoured as an unspoilt and healthy child.

Jack never made a joke, but, certes, he could enjoy one; and he had a way of showing his enjoyment by a twinkle in his blue eye and a chuckle in his throat that was peculiarly impressive.

Jack was a type of a large class. He was what we may call an *outskirter* of the world. He was one of those who, from the force of necessity, or of self-will, or of circumstances, are driven to the outer circle of this world to do as Adam and Eve's family did, battle with Nature in her wildest scenes and moods; to earn his bread, literally, in the sweat of his brow.

Jack was a middle-sized man of strong make. He was not sufficiently large to overawe men by his size, neither was he so small as to invite impertinence from "big bullies," of whom there were plenty in his neighbourhood. In short, being an unpretending man and a plain man, with a good nose and large chin and sandy hair, he was not usually taken much notice of by strangers during his journeyings in the world; but when vigorous action in cases of emergency was required Jack Robinson was the man to make himself conspicuous.

It is not our intention to give an account of Jack's

adventurous life from beginning to end, but to detail the incidents of a sojourn of two months at Fort Desolation, in almost utter solitude, in order to show one of the many phases of rough life to which outskirters are frequently subjected.

In regard to his early life it may be sufficient to say that Jack, after being born, created such perpetual disturbance and storm in the house that his worthy father came to look upon him as a perfect pest, and as soon as possible sent him to a public school, where he fought like a Mameluke Bey, learned his lessons with the zeal of a philosopher, and, at the end of ten years ran away to sea, where he became as sick as a dog and as miserable as a convicted felon.

Poor Jack was honest of heart and generous of spirit, but many a long hard year did he spend in the rugged parts of the earth ere he recovered (if he ever did recover) from the evil effects of this first false step.

In course of time Jack was landed in Canada, with only a few shillings in his pocket; from that period he became an outskirter. The romance in his nature pointed to the backwoods; he went thither at once, and was not disappointed. At first the wild life surpassed his expectations, but as time wore on the tinsel began to wear off the face of things, and he came to see them

as they actually were. Nevertheless, the romance of life did not wear out of his constitution. Enthusiasm, quiet but deep, stuck to him all through his career, and carried him on and over difficulties that would have disgusted and turned back many a colder spirit.

Jack's first success was the obtaining of a situation as clerk in the store of a general merchant in an out-skirt settlement of Canada. Dire necessity drove him to this. He had been three weeks without money and nearly two days without food before he succumbed. Having given in, however, he worked like a Trojan, and would certainly have advanced himself in life if his employer had not failed and left him, minus a portion of his salary, to "try again."

Next, he became an engineer on board one of the Missouri steamers, in which capacity he burst his boiler, and blew himself and the passengers into the river—the captain having adopted the truly Yankee expedient of sitting down on the safety-valve while racing with another boat!

Afterwards, Jack Robinson became clerk in one of the Ontario steam-boats, but, growing tired of this life, he went up the Ottawa, and became overseer of a saw-mill. Here, being on the frontier of civilization, he saw the roughest of Canadian life. The lumbermen of that district are a mixed race—French-Canadians,

Irishmen, Indians, half-castes, &c.—and whatever good qualities these men might possess in the way of hewing timber and bush-life, they were sadly deficient in the matters of morality and temperance. But Jack was a man of tact and good temper, and played his cards well. He jested with the jocular, sympathized with the homesick, doctored the ailing in a rough and ready fashion peculiarly his own, and avoided the quarrelsome. Thus he became a general favourite.

Of course it was not to be expected that he could escape an occasional broil, and it was herein that his early education did him good service. He had been trained in an English school where he became one of the best boxers. The lumberers on the Ottawa were not practised in this science; they indulged in that kicking, tearing, pommelling sort of mode which is so repugnant to the feelings of an Englishman. The consequence was that Jack had few fights, but these were invariably with the largest bullies of the district; and he, in each case, inflicted such tremendous facial punishment on his opponent that he became a noted man, against whom few cared to pit themselves.

There are none so likely to enjoy peace as those who are prepared for war. Jack used sometimes to

say, with a smile, that his few battles were the price he had to pay for peace.

Our hero was unlucky. The saw-mill failed—its master being a drunkard. When that went down he entered the lumber trade, where he made the acquaintance of a young Scotchman, of congenial mind and temperament, who suggested the setting up of a store in a promising locality and proposed entering into partnership. "Murray and Robinson" was forthwith painted by the latter (who was a bit of an artist), over the door of a small log-house, and the store soon became well known and much frequented by the sparse population as well as by those engaged in the timber trade.

But "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." There must have been a screw loose somewhere, for bad debts accumulated and losses were incurred which finally brought the firm to the ground, and left its dissevered partners to begin the world over again!

After this poor Jack Robinson fell into low spirits for a time, but he soon recovered, and bought a small piece of land at a nominal price in a region so wild that he had to cut his own road to it, fell the trees with his own hand, and, in short, reclaim it from the wilderness on the margin of which it lay. This

was hard work, but Jack liked hard work, and whatever work he undertook he always did it well. Strange that such a man could not get on ! yet so it was, that, in a couple of years, he found himself little better off than he had been when he entered on his new property. The region, too, was not a tempting one. No adventurous spirits had located themselves beside him, and only a few had come within several miles of his habitation.

This did not suit our hero's sociable temperament, and he began to despond very much. Still his sanguine spirit led him to persevere, and there is no saying how long he might have continued to spend his days and his energies in felling trees and sowing among the stumps and hoping for better days, had not his views been changed and his thoughts turned into another channel by a letter.

CHAPTER. II.

THE LETTER, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

ONE fine spring morning Jack was sitting, smoking his pipe after breakfast, at the door of his log cabin, looking pensively out upon the tree-stump-encumbered field which constituted his farm. He had facetiously named his residence the Mountain House, in consequence of there being neither mountain nor hill larger than an inverted wash-hand basin, within ten miles of him! He was wont to defend the misnomer on the ground that it served to keep him in remembrance of the fact that hills really existed in other parts of the world.

Jack was in a desponding mood. His pipe would not "draw" that morning; and his mind had been more active than usual for a few days past, revolving the past, the present, and the future. In short, Jack was cross. There could be no doubt whatever about it; for he suddenly, and

without warning, dashed his pipe to pieces against a log, went into the house for another, which he calmly filled, as he resumed his former seat, lit, and continued to smoke for some time in sulky silence. We record this fact because it was quite contrary to Jack's amiable and patient character, and showed that some deep emotions were stirring within him.

The second pipe "drew" well. Probably it was this that induced him to give utterance to the expression—

"I wonder how long this sort of thing will last?"

"Just as long as you've a mind to let it, and no longer," answered a man clad in the garb of a trapper, whose mocassin foot had given no indication of his approach until he was within a couple of paces of the door.

"Is that you, Joe?" said Jack, looking up, and pointing to a log which served as a seat on the other side of the doorway.

"It's all that's of me," replied Joe.

"Sit down and fill your pipe out of my pouch, Joe. It's good 'baccy, you'll find. Any news? I suppose not. There never is; and if there was, what would be the odds to me?"

"In the blues?" remarked the hunter, regarding Jack with a peculiar smile through his first puff of smoke.

"Rather!" said Jack.

"Grog?" inquired Joe.

"Haven't tasted a drop for months," replied Jack.

"All square *here*?" inquired the hunter, tapping his stomach.

"Could digest gun-flints and screw nails!"

The two smoked in silence for some time; then Joe drew forth a soiled letter, which he handed to his companion, saying—

"It's bin lying at the post-office for some weeks, and as the postmaster know'd I was comin' here he asked me to take it. I've a notion it may be an offer to buy your clearin', for I've heerd two or three fellows speakin' about it. Now, as I want to buy it myself, if yer disposed to sell it, I hereby make you the *first* offer."

Jack Robinson continued to smoke in silence, gazing abstractedly at the letter. Since his mother had died, a year before the date of which we write, he had not received a line from any one, insomuch that he had given up calling at the post-office on his occasional visits to the nearest settlement. This letter, therefore, took him by surprise, all the more

that it was addressed in the handwriting of his former partner, Murray.

Breaking the seal, he read as follows :—

“FORT KAMENISTAQUOIA, April —

“DEAR JACK,—You'll be surprised to see my fist, but not more surprised than I was to hear from an old hunter just arrived, that you had taken to farming. It's not your forte, Jack, my boy. Be advised. Sell off the farm for what it will fetch, and come and join me. My antecedents are not in my favour, I grant; but facts are stubborn things, and it is a fact that I am making dollars here like stones. I'm a fur-trader, my boy. Have joined a small company, and up to this time have made a good thing of it. You know something of the fur trade, if I mistake not. Do come and join us; we want such a man as you at a new post we have established on the coast of Labrador. Shooting, fishing, hunting, *ad libitum*. Eating, drinking, sleeping, *ad infinitum*. What would you more? Come, like a good fellow, and be happy!

“Ever thine,

“J. MURRAY.”

“I'll sell the farm,” said Jack Robinson, folding the letter.

"You will?" exclaimed Joe. "What's your price?"

"Come over it with me, and look at the fixings, before I tell you," said Jack.

They went over it together, and looked at every fence and stump and implement. They visited the live stock, and estimated the value of the sprouting crop. Then they returned to the house, where they struck a bargain off-hand.

That evening Jack bade adieu to the Mountain House, mounted his horse, with his worldly goods at the pommel of the saddle, and rode away, leaving Joe, the trapper, in possession.

In process of time our hero rode through the settlements to Montreal, where he sold his horse, purchased a few necessities, and made his way down the St. Lawrence to the frontier settlements of the bleak and almost uninhabited north shore of the gulf. Here he found some difficulty in engaging a man to go with him, in a canoe, towards the coast of Labrador.

An Irishman, in a fit of despondency, at length agreed; but on reaching a saw-mill that had been established by a couple of adventurous Yankees, in a region that seemed to be the out-skirts of creation, Paddy repented, and vowed he'd go no farther for love or money.

Jack Robinson earnestly advised the faithless man to go home, and help his grandmother, thenceforth, to plant murphies; after which he embarked in his canoe alone, and paddled away into the dreary north.

Camping out in the woods at night, paddling all day, and living on biscuit and salt pork, with an occasional duck or gull, by way of variety; never seeing a human face from morn till night, nor hearing the sound of any voice except his own, Jack pursued his voyage for fourteen days. At the end of that time he descried Fort Kamenistaquoia. It consisted of four small log-houses, perched on a conspicuous promontory, with a flag-staff in the midst of them.

Here he was welcomed warmly by his friend John Murray and his colleagues, and was entertained for three days sumptuously on fresh salmon, salt pork, pancakes, and tea. Intellectually, he was regaled with glowing accounts of the fur trade and the salmon fisheries of that region.

"Now, Jack," said Murray, on the third day after his arrival, while they walked in front of the fort, smoking a morning pipe, "it is time that you were off to the new fort. One of our best men has built it, but he is not a suitable person to take charge, and as

the salmon season has pretty well advanced we are anxious to have you there to look after the salting and sending of them to Quebec."

"What do you call the new fort?" inquired Jack.

"Well, it has not yet got a name. We've been so much in the habit of styling it the New Fort that the necessity of another name has not occurred to us. Perhaps, as you are to be its first master, we may leave the naming of it to you."

"Very good," said Jack; "I am ready at a moment's notice. Shall I set off this forenoon?"

"Not quite so sharp as that," replied Murray, laughing. "To-morrow morning, at day-break, will do. There is a small sloop lying in a creek about twenty miles below this. We beached her there last autumn. You'll go down in a boat with three men, and haul her into deep water. There will be spring tides in two days, so, with the help of tackle, you'll easily manage it. Thence you will sail to the new fort, forty miles farther along the coast, and take charge."

"The three men you mean to give me know their work, I presume?" said Jack.

"Of course they do. None of them have been at the fort, however."

"Oh! How then shall we find it?" inquired Jack.

"By observation," replied the other. "Keep a sharp look out as you coast along, and you can't miss it."

The idea of mists and darkness and storms occurred to Jack Robinson; but he only answered, "Very good."

"Can any of the three men navigate the sloop?" he inquired.

"Not that I'm aware of," said Murray; "but you know something of navigation, yourself, don't you?"

"No! nothing!"

"Pooh! nonsense. Have you never sailed a boat?"

"Yes, occasionally."

"Well, it's the same thing. If a squall comes, keep a steady hand on the helm and a sharp eye to wind'ard, and you're safe as the Bank. If it's too strong for you, loose the halyards, let the sheets fly, and down with the helm; the easiest thing in the world if you only look alive and don't get flurried."

"Very good," said Jack, and as he said so his pipe went out; so he knocked out the ashes and refilled it.

Next morning our hero rowed away with his three

men, and soon discovered the creek of which his friend had spoken. Here he found the sloop, a clumsy "tub" of about twenty tons burden, and here Jack's troubles began.

The *Fairy*, as the sloop was named, happened to have been beached during a very high tide. It now lay high and dry in what once had been mud, on the shore of a land-locked bay or pond, under the shadow of some towering pines. The spot looked like an inland lakelet, on the margin of which one might have expected to find a bear or a moose-deer, but certainly not a sloop.

"Oh! we shall nevair git him off," said François Xavier, one of the three men—a French-Canadian—on beholding the stranded vessel.

"We'll try," said Pierre, another of the three men, and a burly half-breed.

"Try!" exclaimed Rollo, the third of the three men—a tall, powerful, ill-favoured man, who was somewhat of a bully, who could not tell where he had been born, and did not know who his father and mother had been, having been forsaken by them in his infancy. "Try? you might as well try to lift a mountain! I've a mind to go straight back to Kamenistaquoia and tell Mr. Murray that to his face!"

"Have you?" said Jack Robinson, in a quiet, peculiar tone, accompanied by a gaze that had the effect of causing Rollo to look a little confused. "Come along, lads, we'll begin at once," he continued, "it will be full tide in an hour or so. Get the tackle ready, François; the rest of you set to work, and clear away the stones and rubbish from under her sides."

Jack threw off his coat, and began to work like a hero—as he was. The others followed his example; and the result was that when the tide rose to its full height the sloop was freed of all the rubbish that had collected round the hull; the block tackle was affixed to the mast; the rope attached to a tree on the opposite side of the creek; and the party were ready to haul. But although they hauled until their sinews cracked, and the large veins of their necks and foreheads swelled almost to bursting, the sloop did not move an inch. The tide began to fall, and in a few minutes that opportunity was gone. There were not many such tides to count on, so Jack applied all his energies and ingenuity to the work. By the time the next tide rose they had felled two large pines, and applied them to the side of the vessel. Two of the party swung at the ends of these; the other two hauled on the block-tackle. This time the sloop

moved a little at the full flood ; but the moment of hope soon passed, and the end was not yet attained.

The next tide was the last high one. They worked like desperate men during the interval. The wedge was the mechanical power which prevailed at last. Several wedges were inserted under the vessel's side, and driven home. Thus the sloop was canted over a little towards the water. When the tide was at the full, one man hauled at the tackle, two men swung at the ends of the levers, and Jack hammered home the wedges at each heave and pull ; thus securing every inch of movement. The result was that the sloop slid slowly down the bank into deep water.

It is wonderful how small a matter will arouse human enthusiasm ! The cheer that was given on the successful floating of the *Fairy* was certainly as full of fervour, if not of volume, as that which followed the launching of the *Great Eastern* !

Setting sail down the gulf they ran before a fair breeze which speedily increased to a favouring gale. Before night a small bay was descried, with three log-huts on the shore. This was the new fort. They ran into the bay, grazing a smooth rock in their passage which caused the *Fairy* to tremble from stem to stern, and cast anchor close to a wooden jetty. On the end of this a solitary individual

(apparently a maniac) was seen capering and yelling wildly.

"What fort is this?" shouted Jack.

"Sorrow wan o' me knows," cried the maniac; "it's niver been christened yet. Faix, if it's a fort at all, I'd call it Fort Disolation. Och! but it's lonesome I've been these three days—niver a wan here but meself an' the ghosts. Come ashore, darlints, and comfort me!"

"Fort Desolation, indeed!" muttered Jack Robinson, as he looked round him sadly; "not a bad name. I'll adopt it. Lower the boat, lads."

Thus Jack took possession of his new home.

CHAPTER III.

DOMESTIC AND PERSONAL MATTERS.

JACK ROBINSON's first proceeding on entering the new fort and assuming the command, was to summon the man (supposed to be a maniac) named Teddy O'Donel, to his presence in the "Hall."

"Your name is Teddy O'Donel?" said Jack.

"The same, sir, at your service," said Teddy, with a respectful pull at his forelock. "They was used to call me *Mister* O'Donel when I was in the army, but I've guv that up long ago an' dropped the title wid the commission."

"Indeed: then you were a commissioned officer?" inquired Jack, with a smile.

"Be no manes. It was a slight longer title than that I had. They called me a non-commissioned officer. I niver could find in me heart to consociate wid them consaited commissioners—though there was wan or two of 'em as was desarvin' o' the three stripes. But I niver took kindly to sodgerin'. It

was in the Howth militia I was. Good enough boys they was in their way, but I couldn't pull wid them no how. They made me a corp'ral for good conduct, but, faix, the great review finished me; for I got into that state of warlike feeling that I loaded me muskit five times widout firin', an' there was such a row round about that I didn't know the dirty thing had niver wint off t'ill the fifth time, when she bursted into smithereens an' wint off intirely. No wan iver seed a scrag of her after that. An' the worst was, she carried away the small finger of Bob Riley's left hand. Bob threw down his muskit an' ran off the ground howlin', so I picked the wipon up an' blazed away at the inimy; but, bad luck to him, Bob had left his ramrod in, and I sint it right through the flank of an owld donkey as was pullin' an apple and orange cart. Oh! how that baste did kick up its heels, to be sure! and the apples and oranges they was flyin' like—— Well, well—the long and the short was, that I wint an' towld the colonel I couldn't stop no longer in such a regiment. So I guv it up an' comed out here."

"And became a fur-trader," said Jack Robinson, with a smile.

"Just so, sur, an' fort-builder to boot; for, being a jiner to trade and handy wid the tools, Mr. Murray

sent me down here to build the place and take command, but I s'pose I'm suppersheeded now ! ”

“ Well, I believe you are, Teddy ; but I hope that you will yet do good service as my lieutenant.”

The beaming smile on Teddy's face showed that he was well pleased to be relieved from the responsibilities of office.

“ Sure,” said he, “ the throuble I have had wid the min an' the salvages for the last six weeks—it's past belavin' ! An' thin, whin I sint the men down to the river to fush—more nor twinty miles off—an' whin the salvages wint away and left me alone wid only wan old salvage woman!—och ! I'd not wish my worst inimy in me sitivation.”

“ Then the savages have been giving you trouble, have they ? ”

“ They have, sur, but not so much as the min.”

“ Well, Teddy,” said Jack, “ go and fetch me something to eat, and then you shall sit down and give me an account of things in general. But first give my men food.

“ Sure they've got it,” replied Teddy, with a broad grin. “ That spalpeen they calls Rollo axed for meat he first thing, in a voice that made me think he'd ait ne up alive av he didn't git it. So I guv 'em the run o' the pantry. What'll yer plaze to dhrink, sur ? ”

"What have you got?"

"Tay and coffee, sur, not to mintion wather. There's only flour an' salt pork to ait, for this is a bad place for game. I've not seed a bird or a bear for three weeks, an' the seals is too cute for me. But I'll bring ye the best that we've got."

Teddy O'Donel hastened to the kitchen, a small log-hut in rear of the dwelling-house, and left Jack Robinson alone in the "Hall."

Jack rose, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and walked to the window. It was glazed with parchment, with the exception of the centre square, which was of glass.

"Pleasant, uncommonly pleasant," he muttered, as he surveyed the landscape.

In front lay a flat beach of sand with the gulf beyond, the horizon being veiled in mist. Up the river there was a flat beach with a hill beyond. It was a black iron-looking hill, devoid of all visible verdure, and it plunged abruptly down into the sea as if it were trying fiercely to drown itself. Down the river there was a continuation of flat beach, with, apparently, nothing whatever beyond. The only objects that enlivened the dreary expanse were, the sloop at the end of the wooden jetty and a small flag-staff in front of the house, from which a flag was flying

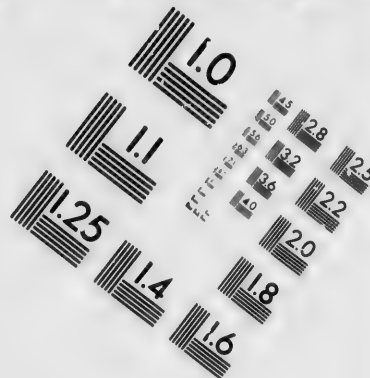
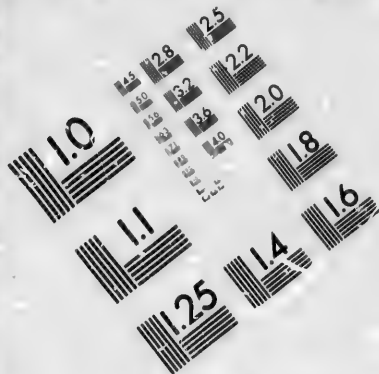
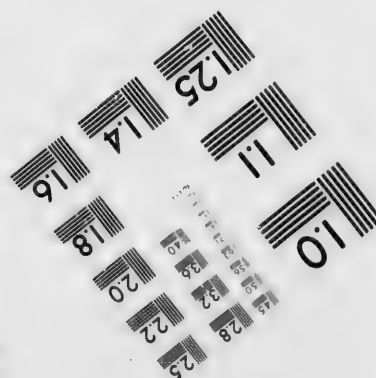
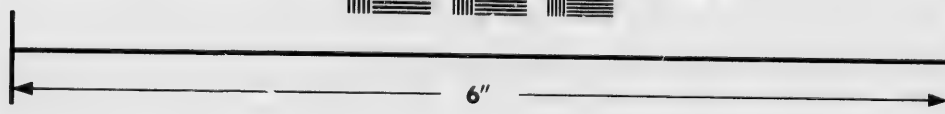
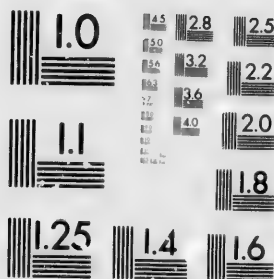


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in honour of the arrival of the new governor. At the foot of this flagstaff there stood an old iron cannon, which looked pugnacious and cross, as if it longed to burst itself and blow down all visible creation.

Jack Robinson's countenance became a simple blank as he took the first survey of his new dominions. Suddenly a gleam of hope flitted across the blank.

"Perhaps the back is better," he muttered, opening the door that led to the rear of the premises. In order to get out he had to pass through the kitchen, where he found his men busy with fried pork and flour cakes, and his lieutenant, Teddy, preparing coffee.

"What is that?" inquired Jack, pointing to a small heap of brown substance which Teddy was roasting in a frying-pan.

"Sure it's coffee," said the man.

"Eh?" inquired Jack.

"Coffee, sur," repeated Teddy with emphasis.

"What is it made of?" inquired Jack.

"Bread-crumbs, sur. I'm used to make it of pais, but it takes longer, d'ye see, for I've got to pound 'em in a cloth after they're roasted. The crumbs is a'most as good as the pais, an' quicker made whin yer in a hurry."

Jack's first impulse was to countermand the

crumbs and order tea, but he refrained, and went out to survey the back regions of his new home.

He found that the point selected for the establishment of the fort was a plain of sand, on which little herbage of any kind grew. In rear of the house there was a belt of stunted bushes, which, as he went onward into the interior, became a wood of stunted firs. This seemed to grow a little more dense farther inland, and finally terminated at the base of the distant and rugged mountains of the interior. In fact, he found that he was established on a sandbank which had either been thrown up by the sea, or at no very remote period had formed part of its bed. Returning home so as to enter by the front door, he observed an enclosed space a few hundred yards distant from the fort. Curious to know what it was, he walked up to it, and, looking over the stockade, beheld numerous little mounds of sand with wooden crosses at the head of them. It was the burial-ground of the establishment. Trade had been carried on here by a few adventurous white men before the fort was built. Some of their number having died, a space had been enclosed as a burying-ground. The Roman Catholic Indians afterwards used it, and it was eventually consecrated with much ceremony by a priest.

With a face from which every vestige of intelligence was removed, Jack Robinson returned to the fort and sat down in solitary state in the hall. In the act of sitting down he discovered that the only arm-chair in the room was unsteady on its legs, these being of unequal length. There were two other chairs without arms, and equally unsteady on their legs. These, as well as everything in the room, were made of fir-wood—as yet unpainted. In the empty fire-place Jack observed a piece of charcoal, which he took up and began, in an absent way, to sketch on the white wall. He portrayed a raving maniac as large as life, and then, sitting down, began insensibly to hum,—

“I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls,”

in the midst of which he was interrupted by the entrance of his lieutenant with a tray of viands.

“Ah! yer a purty creatur,” exclaimed Teddy, pausing with a look of admiration before the maniac.

“Come, Teddy, sit down and let’s have the news. What have we here?” said Jack, looking at three covered plates which were placed before him.

“Salt pork fried,” said Teddy removing the cover.

"And here P"

"Salt pork biled," said the man, removing the second cover; "an' salt pork cold, he added, removing the third. "You see, sur, I wasn't sure which way ye'd like it, an' ye was out whin I come to ax; so I just did it up in three fashions. Here's loaf bread, an' it's not bad, though I say it that made it."

As Jack cut down into the loaf, he naturally remembered those lines of a well-known writer:—

"Who has not tasted home-made bread,
A heavy compound of putty and lead!"

"Are these cakes P" he said, as Teddy presented another plate with something hot in it.

"Ay, pancakes they is, made of flour an' wather fried in grease, an' the best of aitin', as ye'll find;—but, musha! they've all stuck together from some raison I han't yet diskivered: but they'll be none the worse for that, and there's plenty of good thick molasses to wash 'em down wid."

"And this," said Jack, pointing to a battered tin kettle, "is the—the——"

"That's the coffee, sur."

"Ah! well, sit down, Teddy, I have seen worse fare than this. Let's be thankful for it. Now, then, let me hear about the fishery."

Nothing pleased Teddy O'Donel so much as being allowed to talk. He sat down accordingly and entertained his master for the next hour with a full, true, and particular account of every thing connected with Fort Desolation. We will not, however, inflict this on the reader. Reduced to its narrowest limits, his information was to the following effect :—

That the Indians, generally, were well disposed towards the traders, though difficult to please. That a good many furs had been already obtained, and there was a report of more coming in. That the salmon fishery was situated on a river twenty miles below the fort, and was progressing favourably ; but that the five men engaged there were a quarrelsome set and difficult to keep in order. Teddy thought, however, that it was all owing to one of the men, named Ladoc, a bully, who kept the other four in bad humour.

But the point on which poor Teddy dilated most was his solitude. For some time he had been living with no other companions than an old Indian woman and her half-caste daughter, and they having left him, during the last three days he had been living entirely alone “ among the ghosts,” many of which he described minutely.

This intelligence was brought to an abrupt close by

a row among the men in the kitchen. Rollo had been boasting of his walking powers to such an extent, that Pierre had become disgusted and spoke contemptuously of Rollo; whereupon the bully, as usual, began to storm, and his wrath culminated when Pierre asserted that "Mr. Robinson would bring him to his marrow-bones ere long."

"Jack Robinson!" exclaimed Rollo with contempt; "I'd walk him blind in two hours."

Just at that moment the door opened, and Jack stood before them.

"You are too noisy, men," said he, in a quiet voice (Jack almost always spoke in a soft voice); "remember that this kitchen is within hearing of the hall. Rollo, go down to the beach and haul up the sloop's boat, I see the tide is making on her."

Rollo hesitated.

"You hear?" said Jack, still in a quiet tone, but with a look—not a fierce look, or a threatening look, but—a peculiar look, which instantly took effect.

One has often observed a cat when about to spring. It makes many pauses in its prowling towards its prey, and occasional motions that lead one to expect a spring. But the motion which precedes the actual spring is always emphatic. It may not be violent: it may be as slight as all the previous motions, but

there is that in it which tells irresistibly, somehow, of a fixed purpose. So is it, doubtless, with tigers ; so was it with Jack Robinson. His first remark to the men was a prowl ; his order to Rollo was a pause, with an *intention* ; his "you hear ?" softly said, had a *something* in it which induced Rollo to accord instant obedience !

On returning to the hall, Jack paced up and down indignantly. "So there are *two* bullies in the camp," he soliloquized ; "I must cure them both ;—but softly, Jack. It won't do to fight if you can secure peace by other means. Let blows be the last resource. That's my motto. He'll walk me blind ! Well, we shall see, *to-morrow* !

CHAPTER IV.

TAMING A BULLY.

THE morrow came, and Jack Robinson rose with the sun. Long before his men were astir he had inspected the few books and papers of the establishment, had examined the condition of the fur and goods store, and had otherwise made himself acquainted with the details of the fort; having gone over its general features with Teddy the day before.

When the "lieutenant" arose, he found indications of his new master having been everywhere before him, and noted the fact! As Teddy was by no means a man of order—although a good and trustworthy man—there was enough to be done before breakfast. Jack purposely put Rollo into the kitchen to prepare the morning meal, this being comparatively light work. He himself worked with the other men in the stores. There was necessarily a great deal of lifting and shifting and clearing, in all of which

operations he took the heaviest part of the work, and did his work better and more thoroughly than any of the others. Teddy observed this also, and noted the fact!

At breakfast there was naturally a good deal of talk among the men, and special mention was of course made of the energy of their master.

Breakfast over, Jack assembled the men and apportioned to each his day's work.

"I myself," said he, "mean to walk down to the fishery to-day, and I leave O'Donel in charge; I shall be back to-morrow. Rollo, you will prepare to accompany me."

"Yes, sir," answered the man, not knowing very well how to take this. The others glanced at each other intelligently as they departed to their work.

A few minutes sufficed for preparation, and soon Jack stood with his rifle on his shoulder in front of the house. Rollo quickly made his appearance with an old trading gun.

"You can leave that, we won't require it," said Jack; "besides I want to walk fast, so it is well that you should be as light as possible."

"No fear but I'll keep up with you, sir," said the man, somewhat piqued.

"I do not doubt it," replied Jack, "but

gun is enough for us, to put yours by and come along."

Rollo obeyed, and resolved in his heart that he would give his new master a taste of his powers.

Jack started off at a good rattling pace, somewhat over four miles an hour. For the first mile Rollo allowed him to lead, keeping about a foot behind. Then he thought to himself, "Now, my friend, I'll try you," and ranged up beside him, keeping a few yards to one side, however, in order to avoid the appearance of racing. After a few minutes he pushed the pace considerably, and even went ahead of his companion; but, ere long, Jack was alongside and the pace increased to nearly five miles an hour.

Only those who have tried it know, or can fully appreciate, what is meant by adding a mile an hour to one's pace. Most active men go at four miles an hour when walking at a good smart pace. Men *never* walk at five miles an hour except when in the utmost haste, and then only for a short distance. Anything beyond that requires a run in order to be sustained.

It was curious to watch the progress of these two men. The aim of each was to walk at his greatest possible speed, without allowing the slightest evidence

of unwonted exertion to appear on his countenance or in his manner.

They walked on the sands of the shore—there being no roads there—and at first the walking was good, as the tide was out and the sand hard. But before they had got half way to the fishery the sea came in and drove them to the soft sand, which, as nearly every one knows, is terribly fatiguing and difficult to walk in.

Up to this point the two men had kept abreast, going at a tremendous pace, yet conversing quietly and keeping down every appearance of distress; affecting, in fact, to be going at their usual and natural pace! Many a sidelong glance did Rollo cast, however, at his companion, to see if he were likely to give in soon. But Jack was as cool as a cucumber, and wore a remarkably amiable expression of countenance. He even hummed snatches of one or two songs, as though he were only sauntering on the beach. At last he took out his pipe, filled it, and began to smoke, without slackening speed. This filled Rollo with surprise, and for the first time he began to entertain doubts as to the result of the struggle.

As for Jack, he never doubted it for a moment. When they were compelled to take to the heavy sand and sank above the ankles at every step, he changed

his tactics. Putting out his pipe, he fell behind a few paces.

"Ha!" thought Rollo, "done up at last; now I'll give it you."

The thought that he was sure of victory infused such spirit into the man that he braced himself to renewed exertion. This was just what Jack wanted. He kept exactly a foot behind Rollo, yet when the other ventured to slacken his pace (which was now too great to be kept up), he pushed forward just enough to keep him at it, without disheartening him as to the result. In the midst of this they both came to a full stop on discovering a box made of birch bark, which seemed to have been dropped by some passing Indians.

"Hello! what have we here?" cried Jack, stooping down to examine it.

"My blessin' on't whatever it is," thought Rollo, to whom the momentary relief from walking was of the greatest consequence. Jack knew this, and hastened his inspection. It was a box of bear's fat.

"Come, not a bad thing in times like these," observed Jack; "will you carry this or the rifle, my man? See, the rifle is lighter, take that."

Again they stepped out, and the sand seemed to

grow softer and deeper as they advanced. They were now five miles from the end of their journey, so Jack began to exert himself. He pushed on at a pace that caused Rollo to pant and blow audibly. For some time Jack pretended not to notice this, but at last he turned round and said—

“You seem to be fatigued, my man, let me carry the rifle.”

Rollo did not object, and Jack went forward with the box and rifle more rapidly than before. He was perspiring, indeed, at every pore profusely, but wind and limb were as sound as when he started.

He finally left Rollo out of sight, and arrived at the fishery without him!

Half an hour afterwards Rollo arrived. He was a stout fellow, and by taking a short rest, had recovered sufficiently to come in with some degree of spirit; nevertheless, it was evident to all that he was “used up,” for “it is not the distance but the pace that kills!” He found the fishermen at dinner, buttering their cakes with the bear’s grease that had been discovered on the way down. Jack Robinson was sitting in the midst of them, chatting quietly and smoking his pipe beside the fire-place of the hut.

Jack introduced him as one of the new men, but made no reference to the walk from Fort Desolation.

He felt, however, that he had conquered the man, at least for that time, and hoped that further and more violent methods would not be necessary. In this he was disappointed, as the sequel will show.

That night Jack slept on a bed made of old salmon-nets, with a new salmon-net above him for a blanket. It was a peculiar and not a particularly comfortable bed; but in his circumstances he could have slept on a bed of thorns. He gazed up at the stars through the hole in the roof that served for a chimney, and listened to the chirping of the frogs in a neighbouring swamp, to which the snoring of the men around him formed a rough-and-ready bass. Thus he lay gazing and listening, till stars and strains alike melted away and left him in the sweet regions of oblivion.

CHAPTER V.

THE SALMON FISHERY.

NEXT morning, Jack Robinson went out at day-break to inspect the salmon fishery.

The river, up which the fish went in thousands, was broad, deep, and rapid. Its banks were clothed with spruce-fir and dense underwood. There was little of the picturesque or the beautiful in the scenery. It was a bleak spot and unattractive.

Two of the four men who conducted the fishery were stationed at the mouth of the river. The other two attended to the nets about six miles farther up, at a place where there was a considerable fall terminating in a long, turbulent rapid.

With his wonted promptitude and energy, Jack began to make himself master of his position long before the men were stirring. Before Ladoc, who was superintendent, had lighted his first pipe and strolled down to the boat to commence the operations of the day, Jack had examined the nets, the salt-

boxes, the curing-vats, the fish in pickle, the casks, and all the other *matériel* of the fishery, with a critical eye. From what he saw, he was convinced that Ladoc was not the best manager that could be desired, and, remembering that Ladoc was a bully, he was strengthened in an opinion which he had long entertained, namely, that a bully is never a trustworthy man.

He was in the act of forming this opinion, when Ladoc approached.

"Good morning, Ladoc," said he; "you rise early."

"Oui, sair; mais, you gits up more earlier."

"Yes, I am fond of morning air. The fishery prospers, I see."

"It doos, monsieur," said Ladoc, accepting the remark as a compliment to himself; "ve have catch fifteen casks already, and they is in most splendid condition."

"Hum!" ejaculated Jack, with a doubtful look at a cask which was evidently leaking, "hum! yes, you are getting on pretty well, but—"

Here Jack "hummed" again, and looked pointedly at one of the large vats, which was also leaking, and around which there was a great deal of salt that had been scattered carelessly on the ground.

Raising his eyes to the roof of the low shed in which the salt-boxes stood, he touched with his stick a torn piece of its tarpaulin covering, through which rain had found its way in bad weather. He "hummed" again, but said nothing, for he saw that Ladoc was a little disconcerted.

After some minutes Jack turned to his companion with a bland smile, and said—

"The next station is—how many miles did you say?"

"Six, monsieur."

"Ah, six! well, let us go up and see it. You can show me the way."

"Breakfast be ready ver' soon," said Ladoc, "monsieur vill eat first, p'r'aps?"

"No, we will breakfast at the upper station. Ho, Rollo! here, I want you."

Rollo, who issued from the hut at the moment, with a view to examine the weather and light his pipe, came forward.

"I am going with Ladoc to the upper station," said Jack; "you will take his place here until we return."

"Very well, sir," replied Rollo, fixing his eyes upon Ladoc. At the same moment Ladoc fixed his eyes on Rollo. The two men seemed to read each

other's character in a single glance, and then and there hurled silent defiance in each other's teeth through their eyes! Ladoo was annoyed at having been silently found fault with and superseded; Rollo was aggrieved at being left behind; both men were therefore enraged—for it is wonderful how small a matter is sufficient to enrage a bully—but Jack ordered Ladoo to lead the way, so the rivals, or enemies, parted company with another glance of defiance.

That day, Jack Robinson had a somewhat rough and remarkable experience of life.

He began by overhauling the nets at the mouth of the river, and these were so prolific that the small flat-bottomed boat used by the fishermen was soon half filled with glittering salmon, varying from ten to fifteen pounds in weight. In order to avoid having his mocassins and nether garments soiled, Jack, who pulled the sculls, sat with bare feet and tucked-up trousers. In less than an hour he rowed back to the landing-place, literally up to the knees in salmon! Among these were a few young seals that had got entangled in the nets, while in pursuit of the fish, and been drowned. These last were filled with water to such an extent, that they resembled inflated bladders!

'Breakfast is ready, sir,' said one of the men, as the boat-party leaped ashore.

"Very good," replied Jack; turning to Ladoo, "now, my man, are you ready to start for the upper fishery?"

"Eh? ah—oui, monsieur."

There was a titter amongst the men at the expression of their big comrade's face, for Ladoo was ravenously hungry, and felt inclined to rebel at the idea of being obliged to start on a six-miles' walk without food; but as his young master was about to do the same he felt that it was beneath his dignity to complain. Besides, there was a *something* peculiar about Jack's manner that puzzled and overawed the man.

The fact was, that Jack Robinson wanted to know what his bullies were made of, and took rather eccentric methods of finding it out. He accordingly set off at his best pace, and pushed Ladoo so hard, that he arrived at the upper fishery in a state of profuse perspiration, with a very red face, and with a disagreeably vacuous feeling about the pit of his stomach.

They found the men at the station just landing with a boat-load of fish. They were all clean-run, and shone in the bright sunshine like bars of burnished silver.

"Now, Ladoc," said Jack, "get breakfast ready, while I look over matters here."

It need not be said that the man obeyed most willingly. His master went to examine into details. Half-an-hour sufficed to make him pretty well acquainted with the state of matters at the station, and, during breakfast, he soon obtained from the men all the knowledge they possessed about the fishery, the natives, and the region.

One of the men was a half-caste, a fine-looking, grave, earnest fellow, who spoke English pretty well. His name was Marteau.

"The seals and the bears are our worst enemies, sir," said Marteau, in the course of conversation.

"Indeed! and which of the two are worst?" inquired Jack. "Another slice of pork, Ladoc, your appetite appears to be sharp this morning; thank you, go on, Marteau, you were saying something about the bears and seals."

"It's not easy to say which of them is worst, sir. I think the bears is, for the seals eat the bits that they bite out o' the fish, and so get some good of it; but the bears, they goes to the vats and pulls out the salt fish with their claws, for you see, sir, they can't resist the smell, but when they tries to eat 'em—ah! you should see the faces they do make! You see,

they can't stand the salt, so they don't eat maon, but they haul about and tears up an uncommon lot of fish."

"It must make him ver' t'irsty," observed Ladoo, swallowing a can of tea at a draught.

"It makes one thirsty to think of it," said Jack, imitating Ladoo's example; "now, lads, we'll go and overhaul the nets."

Just as he spoke, Ladoo sprang from his seat, seized Jack's gun, which leant against the wall, shouted, "A bear!" and, levelling the piece through the open doorway, took aim at the bushes in front of the hut.

At the same moment Jack leaped forward, struck up the muzzle of the gun just as it exploded, and, seizing Ladoo by the collar, hurled him with extraordinary violence, considering his size, against the wall.

"Make yourself a better hunter," said he, sternly, "before you presume to lay hands again on my gun. Look there!"

Jack pointed, as he spoke, in the direction in which the man had fired, where the object that had been mistaken for a bear appeared in the form of a man, crawling out of the bushes on all-fours. He seemed to move unsteadily, as if he were in pain.

Running to his assistance, they found that he was

an Indian, and, from the blood that bespattered his dress and hand, it was evident that he had been wounded. He was a pitiable object, in the last stage of exhaustion. When the party ran towards him, he looked up in their faces with lustreless eyes, and then sank fainting on the ground.

"Poor fellow!" said Jack, as they carried him into the hut and placed him on one of the low beds; "he must have met with an accident, for there is no warfare in this region among the Indians to account for his being wounded."

"'Tis a strange accident," said Marteau, when the man's clothes were stripped off and the wounds exposed. "An accident sometimes puts *one* bullet through a man, but seldom puts *two*!"

"True," said Jack, "this looks bad, here is a hole clean through the fleshy part of his right arm, and another through his right thigh. An enemy must have done this."

On farther examination it was found that the bone of the man's leg had been smashed by the bullet, which, after passing through to the other side of the limb, was arrested by the skin. It was easily extracted, and the wounds were dressed by Jack, who, to his many useful qualities, added a considerable knowledge of medicine and surgery.

When the Indian recovered sufficiently to give an account of himself to Marteau, who understood his language perfectly, he told him, to the surprise of all, that his double wound was indeed the result of an accident, and, moreover, that he had done the deed with his own hand. Doubtless it will puzzle the reader to imagine how a man could so twist himself, that with an unusually long gun he could send a bullet at one shot through his right arm and right thigh. It puzzled Jack and his men so much, that they were half inclined to think the Indian was not telling the truth, until he explained that about a mile above the hut, while walking through the bushes, he tripped and fell. He was carrying the gun over his shoulder in the customary Indian fashion, that is, by the muzzle, with the stock behind him. He fell on his hands and knees ; the gun was thrown forward and struck against a tree so violently, that it exploded ; in its flight it had turned completely round, so that, at the moment of discharge, the barrel was in a line with the man's arm and leg, and thus the extraordinary wound was inflicted.

To crawl from the spot where the accident occurred took the poor fellow nearly twelve hours, and he performed this trying journey during the night and morning over a rugged country and without food.

The surgical operation engaged Jack's attention the greater part of the forenoon. When it was completed and the Indian made as comfortable as possible, he went out with the men to visit the nets which were set at the rapids about two miles higher up the river.

CHAPTER VI.

JACK HAS A DESPERATE ENCOUNTER.

WE never can tell what a day or an hour may bring forth. This is a solemn fact on which young and old might frequently ponder with advantage, and on which we might enlarge to an unlimited extent; but our space will not admit of moralizing very much, therefore we beg the reader to moralize on that, for him- or herself. The subject is none the less important, that circumstances require that it should be touched on in a slight, almost flippant, manner.

Had Jack Robinson known what lay before him that evening, he would—he would have been a wiser man! Nothing more appropriate than that occurs to us at this moment. But, to be more particular:—

When the party reached the nets, Jack left them to attend to their work, and went off alone to the vats, some of which, measuring about six feet in diameter, were nearly full of fish in pickle.

As he walked along the slight track which guided

him towards them, he pondered the circumstances in which he then found himself, and, indulging in a habit which he had acquired in his frequent and prolonged periods of solitude, began to mutter his thoughts aloud.

"So, so, Jack, you left your farm because you were tired of solitude, and now you find yourself in the midst of society. Pleasant society, truly!—bullies and geese, without a sympathetic mind to rub against. Humph! a pleasant fix you've got into, old fellow."

Jack was wrong in this to some extent, as he afterwards came to confess to himself, for among his men there were two or three minds worth cultivating, noble and shrewd, and deep, too, though not educated or refined. But at the time of which we write, Jack did not know this. He went on to soliloquize :

"Yes, you've got a pretty set to deal with; elements that will cause you enough of trouble before you have done with them. Well, well, don't give in, old chap. Never say die. If solitude is to be your lot, meet it like a man. Why, they say that solitude of the worst kind is to be found where most people dwell. Has it not been said, that in the great city of London itself a man may be more solitary than in the heart of the wilderness? I've read it, but I can't very well

believe it. Yet, there *may* be something in it. Humph! Well, well, Jack, you're not a philosopher, so don't try to go too deep; take it easy, and do the best you can."

At this point Jack came suddenly in sight of the vats. They stood in the centre of a cleared space in the forest. On the edge of the largest vat was perched an object which induced our hero to throw forward his fowling-piece hastily. It was a black bear, or rather the hind-quarters of a black bear, for the head and one paw and shoulder of the animal were far down in the vat. He was holding firmly to its edge by the hind legs and one fore-leg, while with the other he was straining his utmost to reach the fish.

Jack's first impulse was to fire, but reflecting that the portion of the bear then in view was not a very vulnerable part, he hesitated, and finally crept behind a tree to consider, feeling confident that whatever should occur he would be pretty sure of getting a favourable opportunity to fire with effect.

Quite unconscious of his danger, bruin continued to reach down into the vat with unwearied determination. His efforts were rewarded with success, for he presently appeared on the edge of the vat with a fine salmon in his embrace. Now was Jack's opportunity. He raised his piece, but remembering Marteau's

remark about the bear's difficulty in eating salt salmon, he postponed the fatal shot until he should have studied this point in natural history.

His forbearance met with a reward, for the bear kept him during the next five minutes in such a state of suppressed laughter, that he could not have taken a steady aim to have saved his life. Its sense of smell was evidently gratified, for on leaping to the ground it took a powerful snuff, and then began to devour the salmon with immense gusto. But the first mouthful produced an expression of countenance that could not be misunderstood. It coughed, spluttered, and sneezed, or at least gave vent to something resembling these sounds, and drew back from the fish with a snarl; then it snuffed again. There was no mistaking the smell. It was delicious! Bruin, disbelieving his sense of taste, and displaying unwise faith in his sense of smell, made another attempt. He had tried the head first; with some show of reason he now tried the tail. Faugh! it was worse than the other; "as salt as fire," as we have heard it sometimes expressed. The spluttering at this point became excessive, and it was clear that the bear was getting angry. Once again, with an amount of perseverance that deserved better fortune, the bear snuffed heartily at the fish, tore it to shreds with his claws, and then

tried another mouthful, which it spat out instantly. Displaying all its teeth and gums, it shut its eyes, and, raising its head in the air, fairly howled with disappointment.

Jack now deemed it prudent to bring the scene to a close, so, calming himself as well as he could, he took a steady aim, and, watching his opportunity, fired.

The bear did not fall. It faced round in a moment, and, uttering a fierce growl, very unlike to its previous tones, rushed upon its enemy, who fired his second barrel at the creature's breast. Whether it was that Jack's fit of laughter had shaken his nerves so as to render him incapable of taking a good aim, is a matter of uncertainty, but although both shots took effect, the bear was not checked in his career. Or it came. Jack had no time to load. He turned to run, when his quick eye observed a branch of a tree over his head within reach. Dropping his gun he bounded upwards and caught it, and, being unusually powerful in the arms, drew himself up and got astride of it just as the bear reached the spot. But bruin was not to be balked so easily. He was a black bear and a good climber. Finding that he could not at his utmost stretch obtain a nibble at Jack's toes, he rushed at the trunk of the tree and began to ascend rapidly. Jack at once moved towards the end of the branch, intend-

ing to drop to the ground, recover his gun and run for it; but the movement broke the branch off suddenly, and he came down with such a crash, that the bear stopped, looked round, and, seeing his enemy on the ground, began to descend.

Although somewhat stunned by the fall, our hero was able to spring up and run in the direction of the hut. The bear was so close on his heels, however, that he had no chance of his reaching it. He felt this, and, as a last resource, doubled on his track like a hare and made for the banks of the river, which were twenty feet high at the place, intending to leap into the rapid and take his chance.

In this, too, he was foiled. His fall from the tree had partially disabled him, and he could not run with his wonted agility. About ten yards from the edge of the bank the bear overtook him, and it seemed as if poor Jack Robinson's troubles were at last about to be brought to an abrupt close. But Jack was self-possessed and brave as steel. On feeling the bear's claws in his back, he drew his knife, wheeled round, fell into its embrace, and plunged the knife three or four times in its side. The thing was done in a moment, and the two falling together, rolled over the edge of the steep bank, and went crashing down through the bushes amid

a cloud of dust and stones into the raging flood below.

At the foot of the rapid, Marteau and one of the men happened to be rowing ashore with a load of fish.

"Hallo! what's that?" cried Marteau.

"Eh!" exclaimed his comrade.

"A bear!" shouted Marteau, backing his oar.

"And a man! What! I say!"

"Pull! pull!"

Next moment the boat was dancing on the foam, and Marteau had hold of the bear's neck with one hand, and Jack's hair with the other.

They were soon hauled to land, the bear in its dying agonies and Jack in a state of insensibility; but it took the united strength of the two men to tear him from the tremendous grasp that he had fastened on the brute, and his knife was found buried to the handle close alongside of bruin's heart!

CHAPTER VII

SOLITUDE.

ON the day of his encounter with the bear, Jack Robinson sent Rollo up to the fort to fetch down all the men except O'Donel in order that the fishery might be carried on with vigour.

Of course it is unnecessary to inform the reader that Jack speedily recovered from the effects of his adventure. It would be absurd to suppose that anything of an ordinary nature could kill or even do much damage to our hero. Beyond five deep punctures on his back and five on his breast, besides a bite in the shoulder, Jack had received no damage, and was able to return on foot to Fort Desolation a few days after the event.

On arriving, he found his man, Teddy O'Donel, sitting over the kitchen fire in the last stage of an attack of deep depression and home sickness. Jack's sudden appearance wrought an instantaneous cure.

"Ah!" said he, grasping his master's hand and wringing it warmly; "it's a blessed sight for sore eyes! Sure I've bin all but dead, sur, since ye wint away."

"You've not been ill, have you?" said Jack, looking somewhat earnestly in the man's face.

"Ill? No, not i' the body, if that's what ye mane, but I've been awful bad i' the mind. It's the intellect as kills men more nor the body. The sowl is what does it all." (Here Teddy passed his hand across his forehead and looked haggard.) "Ah! Mr. Robinson, it's myself as'll niver do to live alone. I do belave that all the ghosts as iver lived have come and took up there abode in this kitchen."

"Nonsense!" said Jack, sitting down on a stool beside the fire and filling his pipe; "you're too superstitious."

"Superstitious, is it?" exclaimed the man, with a look of intense gravity. "Faix, if ye seed them ye'd change yer tune. It's the noses of 'em as is wust. Of all the noses for length and redness and for blowin' like trumpets I ever did see—well, well, it's no use conjicturin', but I do wonder sometimes what guv the ghosts sitch noses."

"I suppose they *knows* that best themselves," observed Jack.

"P'r'aps they does," replied Teddy with a meditative gaze at the fire.

"But I rather suspect," continued Jack, "that as your own nose is somewhat long and red, and as you've got a habit of squinting, not to mention snoring, Teddy, we may be justified in accounting for the——"

"Ah! it's no use jokin'," interrupted O'Donel; "ye'll niver joke me out o' my belaiif in ghosts. It's no longer agone than last night, after tay, I laid me down on the floor beside the fire in sitch a state o' moloncholly weakness, that I really tried to die. It's true for ye; and I belave I'd have done it, too, av I hadn't wint off to slape by mistake, an' whin I awoke, I was so cowld and hungry that I thought I'd pusspone dyin' till after supper. I got better after supper, but, och! it's a hard thing to live all be yer lone like this."

"Have no Indians been here since I left?"

"Not wan, sur."

"Well, Teddy, I will keep you company now. We shall be alone here together for a few weeks, as I mean to leave all our lads at the fishery. Meanwhile, bestir yourself and let me have supper."

During the next few weeks Jack Robinson was very busy. Being an extremely active man, he soon

did every conceivable thing that had to be done about the fort, and conceived, as well as did, a good many things that did not require to be done. While rummaging in the stores, he discovered a hand-net, with which he waded into the sea and caught large quantities of small fish, about four inches in length, resembling herrings. These he salted and dried in the sun, and thus improved his fare,—for, having only salt pork and fresh salmon, he felt the need of a little variety. Indeed, he had already begun to get tired of salmon, insomuch that he greatly preferred salt pork.

After that, he scraped together a sufficient number of old planks, and built therewith a flat-bottomed boat—a vessel much wanted at the place. But, do what he would, time hung very heavy on his hands, even although he made as much of a companion of Teddy O'Donel, as was consistent with his dignity. The season for wild fowl had not arrived, and he soon got tired of going out with his gun, with the certainty of returning empty-handed.

At last there was a brief break in the monotony of the daily life at Fort Desolation. A band of Indians came with a good supply of furs. They were not a very high type of human beings, had little to say, and did not seem disposed to say it. But they wanted

goods from Jack, and Jack wanted furs from them; so their presence during the two days and nights they stayed shed a glow of moral sunshine over the fort that made its inhabitants as light-hearted and joyful as though some unwonted piece of good fortune had befallen them.

When the Indians went away, however, the gloom was proportionally deeper, Jack and his man sounded lower depths of despair than they had ever before fathomed, and the latter began to make frequent allusions to the possibility of making away with himself. Indeed, he did one evening, while he and Jack stood silently on the shore together, propose that they should go into the bush behind the fort, cover themselves over with leaves, and perish "at wance, like the babes in the wood."

Things were in this gloomy condition, when an event occurred, which, although not of great importance in itself, made such a deep impression on the dwellers at Fort Desolation, that it is worthy of a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER VIII.

HORRORS.

ONE morning the sun rose with unwonted splendour on the broad bosom of the St. Lawrence. The gulf was like a mirror, in which the images of the sea-gulls were as perfect as the birds themselves, and the warm hazy atmosphere was lighted up so brightly by the sun, that it seemed as though the world were enveloped in delicate golden gauze.

Jack Robinson stood on the shore, with the exile of Erin beside him. Strange to say, the effect of this lovely scene on both was the reverse of gladdening.

"It's *very* sad," said Jack, slowly.

"True for ye," observed the sympathizing Teddy, supposing that his master had finished his remark.

"It's *very* sad," repeated Jack, "to look abroad upon this lovely world, and know that thousands of our fellow-men are enjoying it in each other's society, while we are self-exiled here."

"An' so it is," said Teddy, "not to mention our fellow-women an' our fellow-childers to boot."

"To be sure we have got each other's society, O'Donel," continued Jack, "and the society of the gulls——"

"An' the fush," interposed Teddy.

"And the fish," assented Jack; "for all of which blessings we have cause to be thankful; but it's my opinion that you and I are a couple of egregious asses for having forsaken our kind and come to vegetate here in the wilderness."

"That's just how it is, sur. We're both on us big asses, an' it's a pint for investigation which on us is the biggest—you, who ought to have know'd better, or me, as niver know'd anything, a'most, to spake of."

Jack smiled. He was much too deeply depressed to laugh. For some minutes they stood gazing in silent despondency at the sea.

"What's that?" exclaimed Jack, with sudden animation, pointing to an object which appeared at the moment near the extremity of a point of rocks not far from the spot where they stood—"a canoe?"

"Two of 'em!" cried O'Donel, as another object came into view.

The change which came over the countenances of

the two men, as they stood watching the approach of the two canoes, would have been incomprehensible to any one not acquainted with the effect of solitude on the human mind. They did not exactly caper on the beach, but they felt inclined to do so, and their heaving bosoms and sparkling eyes told of the depth of emotion within.

In about a quarter of an hour the canoes were within a short distance of the landing-place, but no shout or sign of recognition came from the Indians who paddled them. There was an Indian in the bow and stern of each canoe, and a woman in the middle of one of them.

"Well, boys, what cheer?" said Jack, using a well-known backwood's salutation, as the men landed.

The Indians silently took the proffered hand of the trader and shook it, replying in a low voice, "Wachee," as the nearest point they could attain to the pronunciation of "What cheer?"

There was something so unusually solemn in the air and manner of the savages, that Jack glanced at the canoe in which the woman sat. There he saw what explained the mystery. In the bottom lay an object wrapped up in pieces of old cloth and birch-bark, which, from its form, was evidently a human body. A few words with the Indians soon drew from

them the information that this was one of their wives who had been ailing for a long time, and at length had died. They were Roman Catholic converts, and had come to bury the body in the graveyard of the fort which had been "consecrated" by a priest.

To whatever pitch of excitement Jack and his man had risen at the unexpected appearance of the Indians, their spirits fell to an immeasurably profounder depth than before when their errand was made known.

Everything connected with this burial was sad and repulsive, yet Jack and his man felt constrained, out of mere sympathy, to witness it all.

The Indians were shabby and squalid in the extreme, and, being destitute of the means of making a coffin, had rolled the corpse up in such wretched materials as they happened to possess. One consequence of this was, that it was quite supple. On being lifted out of the canoe, the joints bent, and a sort of noise was emitted from the mouth, which was exceedingly horrible. Had the dead face been visible, the effect would not have been so powerful, but its being covered tended to set the imagination free to conceive things still more dreadful.

The grave was soon dug in the sand inside the graveyard, which was not more than a hundred yards

on one side of the fort. Here, without ceremony of any kind, the poor form was laid and covered over. While being lowered into the grave, the same doubling-up of the frame and the same noise were observed. After all was over, the Indians returned to their canoe and paddled away, silently, as they had come; not before Jack, however, had gone to the store for a large piece of tobacco, which he threw to them as they were pushing off.

During the remainder of that day, Jack Robinsor and his man went about their vocations with hearts heavy as lead. But it was not till night that this depression of spirits culminated. For the first time in his life Jack Robinson became superstitiously nervous. As for Teddy O'Donel, he had seldom been entirely free from this condition during any night of his existence; but he was much worse than usual on the present occasion!

After sunset, Jack had his tea alone in the hall, while O'Donel took his—also, of course, alone—in the kitchen. Tea over, Jack sat down and wrote part of a journal which he was in the habit of posting up irregularly. Then he went into the kitchen to give Teddy his orders for the following day, and stayed longer than usual. Thereafter, he read parts of one or two books which he had brought with him

from the civilized world. But, do what he would, the image of the dead woman lying so near him invariably came between him and the page, and obtruded itself on his mind obstinately. Once he was so exasperated while reading, that he jumped violently off his chair, exclaiming, "This is childish nonsense!" In doing so he tilted the chair over, so that it balanced for an instant on its hind legs, and then fell with an awful crash, which caused him to leap at least three feet forward, clench his fists, and wheel round with a look of fury that would certainly have put to flight any *real* ghost in creation.

Jack gasped, then he sighed, after which he smiled and began to pace the hall slowly. At last he said half aloud, "I think I'll smoke my pipe to-night with that poor fellow, O'Donel. He must be lonely enough, and I don't often condescend to be social."

Taking up his pipe and tobacco-pouch, he went towards the kitchen.

Now, while his master was enduring those uncomfortable feelings in the hall, Teddy was undergoing torments in the kitchen that are past description. He had had a grandmother—with no nose to speak of, a mouth large enough for two, four teeth, and one eye—who had stuffed him in his youth with horrible stories as full as a doll is of sawdust. That old lady's

influence was now strong upon him. Every gust of wind that rumbled in the chimney sent a qualm to his heart. Every creak in the beams of his wooden kitchen startled his soul. Every accidental noise that occurred filled him with unutterable horror. The door, being clumsily made, fitted badly in all its parts, so that it shook and rattled in a perfectly heartrending manner.

Teddy resolved to cure this. He stuck bits of wood in the opening between it and the floor, besides jamming several nails in at the sides and top. Still, the latch *would* rattle, being complicated in construction, and not easily checked in all its parts. But Teddy was an ingenious fellow. He settled the latch by stuffing it and covering it with a mass of dough ! In order further to secure things, he placed a small table against the door, and then sat down on a bench to smoke his pipe beside the door.

It was at this point in the evening that Jack resolved, as we have said, to be condescending.

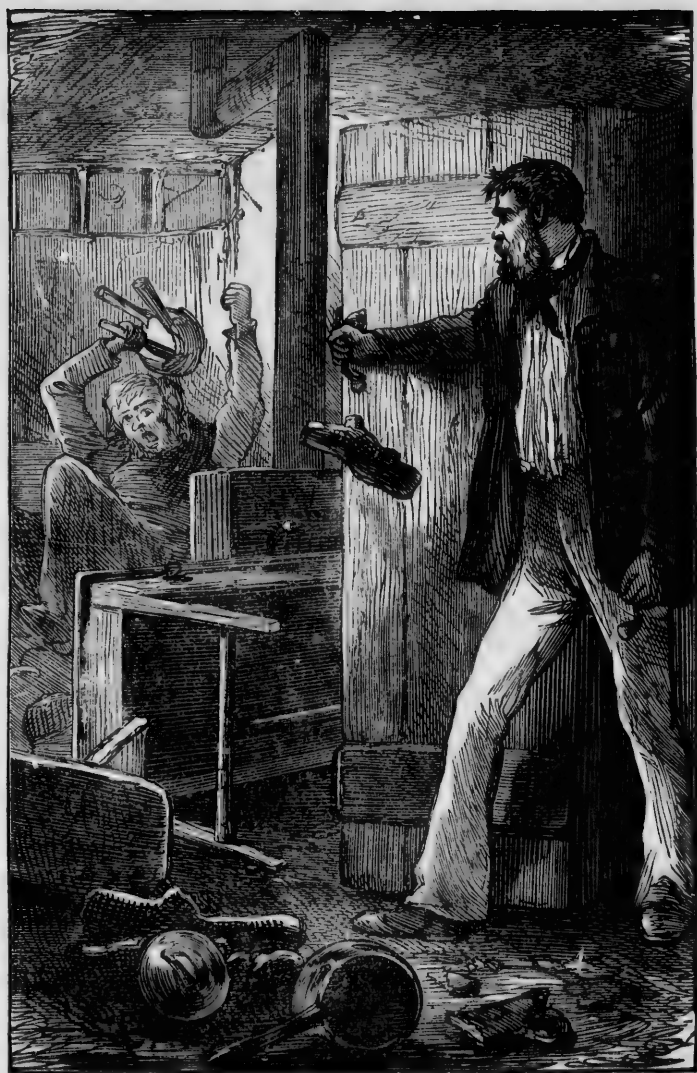
As he had hitherto very seldom smoked his pipe in the kitchen, his footstep in the passage caused O'Donel's very marrow to quake. He turned as pale as death and became rigid with terror, so that he resembled nothing but an Irish statue of very dirty and discoloured marble.

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ENTRANCE OF THE SUPPOSED GHOST.

When Jack put his hand on the latch, Teddy gasped once—he was incapable of more! The vision of the poor Indian woman rose before his mental eye, and he——well, it's of no use to attempt saying what he thought or felt!

The obstruction in the latch puzzled Jack not a little. He was surprised at its stiffness. The passage between the hall and kitchen was rather dark, so that he was somewhat nervous and impatient to open the door. It happened that he had left the door by which he had quitted the hall partially open. A gust of wind shut this with a bang that sent every drop of blood into his heart, whence it rebounded into his extremities. The impulse thus communicated to his hand was irresistible. The door was burst in; as a matter of course the table was hurled into the middle of the kitchen, where it was violently arrested by the stove. Poor Teddy O'Donel, unable to stand it any longer, toppled backwards over the bench with a hideous yell, and fell headlong into a mass of pans, kettles, and firewood, where he lay sprawling and roaring at the full power of his lungs, and keeping up an irregular discharge of such things as came to hand at the supposed ghost, who sheltered himself as he best might behind the stove.

"Hold hard, you frightened ass!" shouted Jack as a billet of wood whizzed over his head.

"Eh! what? It's *you*, sur? O, musha, av I didn't belave it was the ghost at last!"

"I tell you what, my man," said Jack, who was a good deal nettled at his reception, "I would advise you to make sure that it is a ghost next time before you shie pots and kettles about in that way. See what a smash you have made. Why, what on earth have you been doing to the door?"

"Sure I only stuffed up the kayhole to keep out the wind."

"Humph! and the ghosts, I suppose. Well, see that you are up betimes to-morrow and have these salmon nets looked over and repaired."

So saying, Jack turned on his heel and left the room, feeling too much annoyed to carry out his original intention of smoking a pipe with his man. He spent the evening, therefore, in reading a pocket copy of Shakespeare, and retired to rest at the usual hour in a more composed frame of mind and rather inclined to laugh at his superstitious fears.

It happened, unfortunately, that from his window, as he lay on his bed, Jack could see the graveyard. This fact had never been noticed by him before, although he had lain there nightly since his arrival,

and looked over the yard to the beach and the sea beyond. Now, the night being bright moonlight, he could see it with appalling distinctness. Sleep was banished from his eyes, and although he frequently turned with resolution to the wall and shut them, he was invariably brought back to his old position as if by a species of fascination.

Meanwhile Teddy O'Donel lay absolutely quaking in the kitchen. Unable to endure it, he at last rose, opened the door softly, and creeping up as near as he dared venture to his master's door, sat down there, as he said "for company." In course of time he fell asleep.

Jack, being more imaginative, remained awake. Presently he saw a figure moving near the churchyard. It was white—at least the upper half of it was.

"Pshaw! this is positive folly; my digestion must be out of order," muttered Jack, rubbing his eyes; but the rubbing did not dissipate the figure which moved past the yard and approached the fort. At that moment Teddy O'Donel gave vent to a prolonged snore. Delivered as it was against the wooden step on which his nose was flattened, it sounded dreadfully like a groan. Almost mad with indignation and alarm, Jack Robinson leaped from his

bed and pulled on his trousers, resolved to bring things to an issue of some sort.

He threw open his chamber door with violence and descended the staircase noisily, intending to arouse his man. He *did* arouse him, effectually, by placing his foot on the back of his head and crushing his face against the steps with such force as to produce a roar that would have put to shame the war-whoop of the wildest savage in America.

In endeavouring to recover himself, Jack fell upon Teddy and they rolled head-over-heels down the steps together towards the door of the house, which was opened at that instant by Ladoc, who had walked up to the fort, clad only in his shirt and trousers (the night being warm), to give a report of the condition of things at the fishery, where he and Rollo had quarrelled and the men generally were in a state of mutiny.

CHAPTER IX

THE BULLY RECEIVES A LESSON.

WE regret to be compelled to chronicle the fact, that Jack Robinson lost command of his temper on the occasion referred to in the last chapter. He and Teddy O'Donel rolled to the very feet of the amazed Ladoc, before the force of their fall was expended. They sprang up instantly, and Jack dealt the Irishman an open-handed box on the ear that sent him staggering against one of the pillars of the verandah, and resounded in the still night air like a pistol-shot. Poor Teddy would have fired up under other circumstances, but he felt so deeply ashamed of having caused the undignified mishap to his master, that he pocketed the affront, and quietly retired towards his kitchen. On his way thither, however, he was arrested by the tremendous tone in which Jack demanded of Ladoc the reason of his appearance at such an untimely hour.

There was a slight dash of insolence in the man's reply.

"I come up, monsieur," said he, "to tell you if there be *two* masters at fishery, *I* not be one of 'em. Rollo tink he do vat him please, mais I say, no ; so ve quarrel."

"And so, you take upon you to desert your post," thundered Jack.

"Vraiment, oui," coolly replied Ladoc.

Jack clenched his fist and sprang at the man as a bull-terrier might leap on a mastiff. Almost in the act of striking he changed his mind, and, instead of delivering one of those scientific blows with which he had on more than one occasion in his past history terminated a fight at its very commencement, he seized Ladoc by the throat, tripped up his heels, and hurled him to the ground with such force, that he lay quite still for at least half a minute! Leaving him there to the care of O'Donel, who had returned, Jack went up to his bedroom, shut the door, thrust his hands into his pockets, and began to pace the floor rapidly, and to shake his head. Gradually his pace became slower, and the shaking of his head more sedate. Presently he soliloquized in an undertone.

"This won't do, John Robinson. You've let off too much steam. Quite against your principles to be so violent—shame on you, man. Yet after all it *was* very provoking to be made such a fool of before that

insolent fellow. Poor Teddy—I wish I hadn't hit you such a slap. But, after all, you deserved it, you superstitious blockhead. Well, well, it's of no use regretting. Glad I didn't hit Ladoc, though, it's too soon for *that*. Humph! the time has come for action, however. Things are drawing to a point. They shall culminate *to-morrow*. Let me see."

Here Jack's tones became inaudible, and he began to complete his toilette. His thoughts were busy—to judge from his knitted brows and compressed lips. The decision of his motions at last showed that he had made up his mind to a course of action.

It was with a cleared brow and a self-possessed expression of countenance that he descended, a few minutes later, to the hall, and summoned O'Donel.

That worthy, on making his appearance, looked confused, and began to stammer out—

"I beg parding, sur, but—but raally, you know—it, it was all owin' to them abominable ghosts——"

Jack smiled, or rather, tried to smile, but owing to conflicting emotions the attempt resulted in a grin.

"Let bygones be bygones," he said, "and send Ladoc here."

Ladoc entered with a defiant expression, which was evidently somewhat forced.

Jack was seated at a table, turning over some papers. Without raising his head, he said,—

"Be prepared to start for the fishery with me in half-an-hour, Ladoc.

"Monsieur?" exclaimed the man, with a look of surprise.

Jack raised his head and *looked* at him. It was one of his peculiar looks.

"Did you not understand me?" he said, jumping up suddenly.

Ladoc vanished with an abrupt "*Oui, monsieur,*" and Jack proceeded, with a *real* smile on his good-humoured face, to equip himself for the road.

In half an hour the two were walking silently side by side at a smart pace towards the fishery, while poor Teddy O'Donel was left, as he afterwards said, "all be his lone wid the ghost and the newly buried woman," in a state of mental agony, which may, perhaps, be conceived by those who possess strong imaginations, but which cannot by any possibility be adequately described.

CHAPTER X.

STRANGERS AND STRANGE EVENTS.

THE monotony of the night march to the fishery was enlivened by the unexpected apparition of a boat. There was just enough of moonlight to render it dimly visible a few hundred yards from the shore.

"Indians!" exclaimed Ladoc, breaking silence for the first time since they set out.

"The stroke is too steady and regular for Indians," said Jack. "Boat ahoy!"

"Shore ahoy!" came back at once in the ringing tones of a seaman's voice.

"Pull in; there's plenty of water!" shouted Jack.

"Ay, ay," was the response. In a few seconds the boat's keel grated on the sand, and an active sailor jumped ashore. There were five other men in the boat.

"Where have you dropped from?" enquired Jack.

"Well, the last place we dropped from," answered the seaman, "was the port quarter davits of the good

ship Ontario, Captain Jones, from Liverpool to Quebec, with a general cargo; that was last night, and ten minutes afterwards, the Ontario dropped to the bottom of the sea."

"Wrecked!" exclaimed Jack.

"Just so. Leastwise, sprung a leak and gone to the bottom."

"No hands lost, I hope?"

"No, all saved in the boats; but we parted company in the night, and haven't seen each other since. Is there any port hereabouts, where we could get a bit o' summat to eat?"

"There is, friend. Just pull six miles farther along shore as you are going, and you'll come to the place that I have the honour and happiness to command—we call it Fort Desolation. You and your party are heartily welcome to food and shelter there, and you'll find an Irishman in charge who will be overjoyed, I doubt not, to act the part of host. To-morrow night I shall return to the fort."

The shipwrecked mariners, who were half-starved, received this news with a cheer, and pushing off, resumed their oars with fresh vigour, while Jack and his man continued their journey.

They reached the fishery before dawn, and, without awakening the men, retired at once to rest.

Before breakfast, Jack was up, and went out to inspect the place. He found that his orders, about repairing the roof of the out-house and the clearing up, had not been attended to. He said nothing at first, but, from the quiet settled expression of his face, the men felt convinced that he did not mean to let it pass.

He ordered Ladoo to repair the roof forthwith, and bade Rollo commence a general clearing-up. He also set the other men to various occupations, and gave each to understand, that when his job was finished he might return to breakfast. The result of this was, that breakfast that morning was delayed till between eleven and twelve, the fishery speedily assumed quite a new aspect, and that the men ate a good deal more than usual when they were permitted to break their fast.

After breakfast, while they were seated outside the door of their hut smoking, Jack smoked his pipe alone by the margin of the river, about fifty yards off.

"Monsieur be meditating of something this morning," observed little François Xavier, glancing at Rollo with a twinkle in his sharp grey eye.

"He may meditate on what he likes, for all that *I* care," said Rollo with a scornful laugh. "He'll find it difficult to cow *me*, as I'll let him know before long."

Ladoc coughed, and an unmistakable sneer curled his lip as he relighted his pipe. The flushed face of Rollo showed what he felt, but, as nothing had been *said*, he could not with propriety give vent to his passion.

At that moment Jack Robinson hailed Ladoc, who rose and went towards him. Jack said a few words to him, which, of course, owing to the distance, could not be heard by the men. Immediately after, Ladoc was seen to walk away in the direction of an old Indian burying-ground, which lay in the woods about a quarter of a mile from the fishery.

Five minutes later Jack hailed Rollo, who obeyed the summons, and after a few words with his master, went off in the same direction as Ladoc. There seemed something mysterious in these movements. The mystery was deepened when Jack hailed François Xavier, and sent him after the other two, and it culminated when Jack himself, after allowing five minutes more to elapse, sauntered away in the same direction with a stout cudgel under his arm. He was soon lost to view in the woods.

Each of the three men had been told to go to the burying-ground, and to wait there until Jack himself should arrive. Ladoc was surprised on receiving the

order, but, as we have seen, obeyed it. He was more than surprised, however, when he saw Rollo walk into the enclosure, and still more astonished when François followed in due course. None of the three spoke. They felt that Jack would not keep them long in suspense, and they were right. He soon appeared—smoking calmly.

"Now, lads," said he, "come here. Stand aside, François. I have brought you to this place to witness our proceedings, and to carry back a true report to your comrades. Ladoc and Rollo (here Jack's face became suddenly very stern; there was something *intense*, though not loud, in his voice), you have kept my men in constant hot water by your quarrelling since you came together. I mean to put an end to this. You don't seem to be quite sure which of you is the best man. You shall settle that question this day, on this spot, and within this hour. So set to, you rascals! Fight or shake hands. I will see fair play!"

Jack blazed up at this point, and stepped up to the men with such a fierce expression, that they were utterly cowed.

"Fight, I say, or shake hands, or——" Here Jack paused, and his teeth were heard to grate harshly together.

The two bullies stood abashed. They evidently did not feel inclined to "come to the scratch." Yet they saw by the peculiar way in which their master grasped his cudgel, that it would be worse for both of them if they did not obey.

"Well," said Ladoo, turning with a somewhat candid smile to Rollo, "I's willin' to shake hands if *you* be."

He held out his hand to Rollo, who took it in a shamefaced sort of way and then dropped it.

"Good," said Jack; "now you may go back to the hut; *but*, walk arm in arm. Let your comrades *see* that you are friends. Come, no hesitation!"

The tone of command could not be resisted; the two men walked down to the river arm in arm, as if they had been the best of friends, and little François followed—chuckling!

Next day a man arrived on foot with a letter to the gentlemen in charge of Fort Desolation. He and another man had conveyed it to the fort in a canoe from Fort Kamenistaquoia.

"What have we here?" said Jack Robinson, sitting down on the gunwale of a boat and breaking the seal.

The letter ran as follows:—

"Fort Kamenistaquola, &c., &c.

"MY DEAR JACK,

"I am sorry to tell you that the business has all gone to sticks and stivers. We have not got enough of capital to compete with the Hudson's B. Co., and I may remark, privately, that if we had, it would not be worth while to oppose them on this desolate coast. The trade, therefore, is to be given up, and the posts abandoned. I have sent a clerk to succeed you and wind up the business, at Fort D., as I want you to come here directly, to consult as to future plans.

"Your loving but unfortunate friend,

"J. MURRAY."

On reading this epistle, Jack heaved a deep sigh.

"Adrift again!" he muttered.

At that moment his attention was arrested by the sound of voices in dispute. Presently the door of the men's house was flung open, and Rollo appeared with a large bundle on his shoulders. The bundle contained his "little all." He was gesticulating passionately to his comrades.

"What's wrong now?" said Jack to François, as the latter came towards him.

"Rollo he go 'way," said François. "There be an

Indian come in hims canoe, and Rollo make up his mind to go off vid him."

"Oh! has he?" said Jack, springing up and walking rapidly towards the hut.

Now it must be told here that, a few days before the events we are describing, Jack had given Rollo a new suit of clothes from the Company's store, with a view to gain his regard by kindness, and attach him to the service, if possible. Rollo was clad in this suit at the time, and he evidently meant to carry it off.

Jack crushed back his anger as he came up, and said in a calm, deliberate voice, "What *now*, Rollo?"

"I'm going off," said the man fiercely. "I've had enough of *you*."

There was something supernaturally calm and bland in Jack's manner, as he smiled and said—

"Indeed! I'm *very* glad to hear it. Do you go soon?"

"Ay, at once."

"Good. You had better change your dress before going."

"Eh?" exclaimed the man.

"Your clothes belong to the company; *put them off!*" said Jack. "Strip, you blackguard!" he

shouted, suddenly bringing his stick within three inches of Rollo's nose, "Strip, or I'll break every bone in your carcase."

The man hesitated, but a nervous motion in Jack's arm caused him to take off his coat somewhat promptly.

"I'll go into the house," said Rollo, humbly.

"No!" said Jack, sternly, "Strip where you are. Quick!"

Rollo continued to divest himself of his garments, until there was nothing left to remove.

"Here, François," said Jack, "take these things away. Now, sir, you may go."

Rollo took up his bundle and went into the hut, thoroughly crestfallen, to re-clothe himself in his old garments, while Jack strolled into the woods to meditate on his strange fortunes.

That was the end of Rollo. He embarked in a canoe with an Indian and went off—no one knew whither. So, the wicked and useless among men wander about this world to annoy their fellows for a time—to pass away and be forgotten. Perhaps some of them, through God's mercy, return to their right minds. We cannot tell.

According to instructions, Jack made over the charge of his establishment that day to the clerk who

had been sent down to take charge, and next morning set out for Fort Kamenistaquoia, in the boat with the shipwrecked seamen.

Misfortune attended him even to the last minute. The new clerk, who chanced to be an enthusiastic young man, had resolved to celebrate his own advent and his predecessor's departure by firing a salute from an old carronade which stood in front of the fort, and which might, possibly, have figured at the battle of the Nile. He overcharged this gun, and, just as the boat pushed off, applied the match. The result was tremendous. The gun burst into a thousand pieces, and the clerk was laid flat on the sand ! Of course the boat was run ashore immediately, and Jack sprang out and hastened to the scene of the disaster, which he reached just as the clerk, recovering from the effects of the shock, managed to sit up.

He presented a wonderful appearance ! Fortunately, none of the flying pieces of the gun had touched him, but a flat tin dish, full of powder, from which he had primed the piece, had exploded in his face. This was now of a uniform bluish-black colour, without eyelashes or eyebrows, and surmounted by a mass of frizzled material that had once been the unfortunate youth's hair.

Beyond this he had received no damage, so Jack

remained just long enough to dress his hurts, and make sure that he was still fit for duty.

Once more entering the boat, Jack pushed off.

"Good-bye, boys!" said he, as the sailors pulled away. "Farewell, Teddy, mind you find me out when you go up to Quebec,"

"Bad luck to me av I don't," cried the Irishman, whose eyes became watery in spite of himself.

"And don't let the ghosts get the better of you!" shouted Jack.

O'Donel shook his head. "Ah! they're a bad lot, sur—but sorrow wan o' them was iver so ugly as him!"

He concluded this remark by pointing over his shoulder with his thumb in the direction of the house where the new clerk lay, a hideous, though not severely injured, spectacle, on his bed.

A last "farewell" floated over the water, as the boat passed round a point of land. Jack waved his hand, and, a moment later, Fort Desolation vanished from his eyes for ever.

* * * * *

Readers, it is not our purpose here to detail to you the life and adventures of Jack Robinson.

We have recalled and recounted this brief passage in his eventful history, in order to give you some idea

of what "outskirters" and wandering stars of humanity sometimes see, and say, and go through.

Doubtless Jack's future career would interest you, for his was a nature that could not be easily subdued. Difficulties had the effect of stirring him up to more resolute exertions. Opposition had the effect of drawing him on, instead of keeping him back. "Cold water" warmed him. "Wet blankets," when thrown on him, were dried and made hot! His energy was untiring, his zeal red hot, and when one effort failed, he began another with as much fervour as if it were the first he had ever made.

Yet Jack Robinson did not succeed in life. It would be difficult to say why. Perhaps his zeal and energy were frittered away on too many objects. Perhaps, if he had confined himself to one purpose and object in life, he would have been a great man. Yet no one could say that he was given to change, until change was forced upon him. Perchance want of judgment was the cause of all his misfortunes; yet he was a clever fellow: cleverer than the average of men. It may be that Jack's self-reliance had something to do with it, and that he was too apt to trust to his own strength and wisdom, forgetting that there is ONE, without whose blessing man's powers can accomplish no good whatever. We know not. We

do not charge Jack with this, yet this is by no means an uncommon sin, if we are to believe the confessions of multitudes of good men.

Be this as it may, Jack arrived at Fort Kamemistauquoia in due course, and kindly, but firmly, refused to take part with his sanguine friend, J. Murray, who proposed—to use his own language—“the getting-up of a great joint-stock company, to buy up all the saw-mills on the Ottawa!”

Thereafter, Jack went to Quebec, where he was joined by Teddy O'Donel, with whom he found his way to the outskirt settlements of the far west. There, having purchased two horses and two rifles, he mounted his steed, and, followed by his man, galloped away into the prairie to seek his fortune.

THE END.

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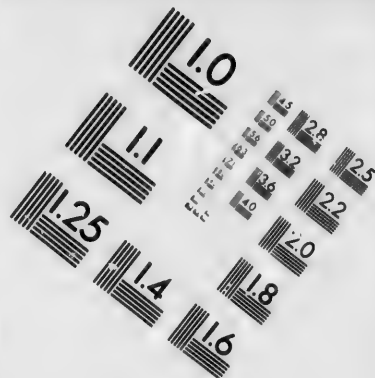
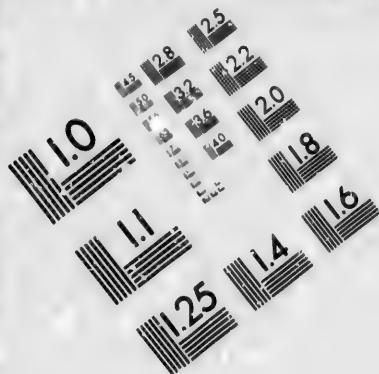
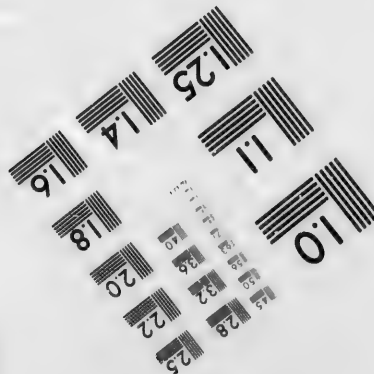
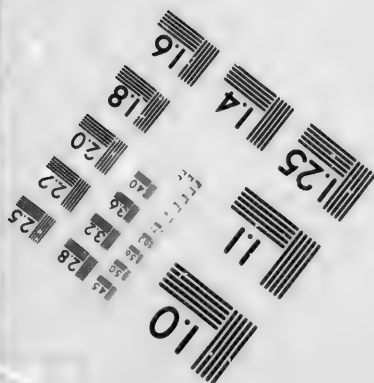
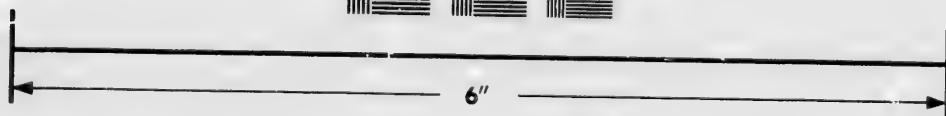
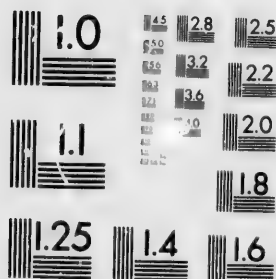


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